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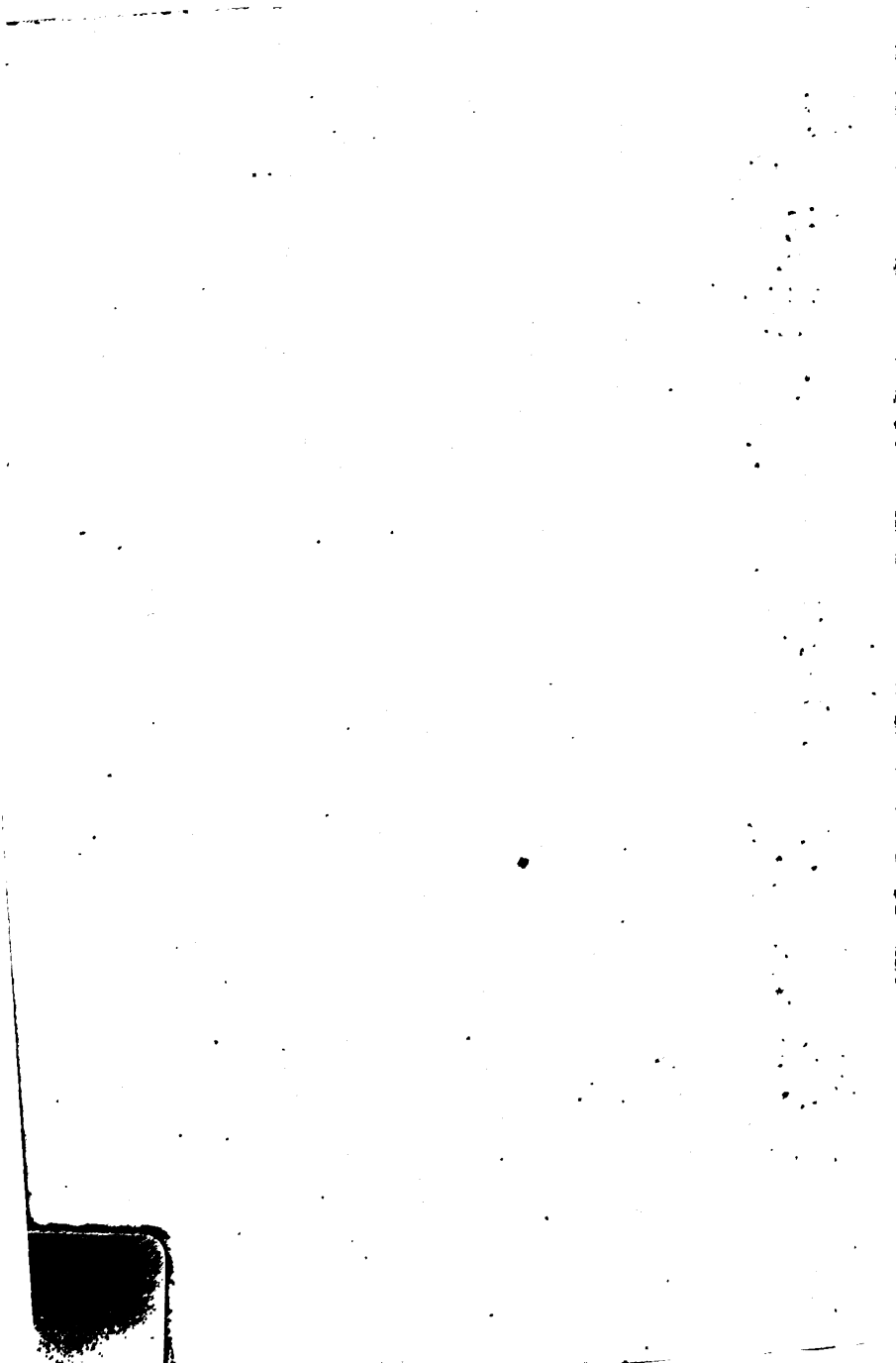
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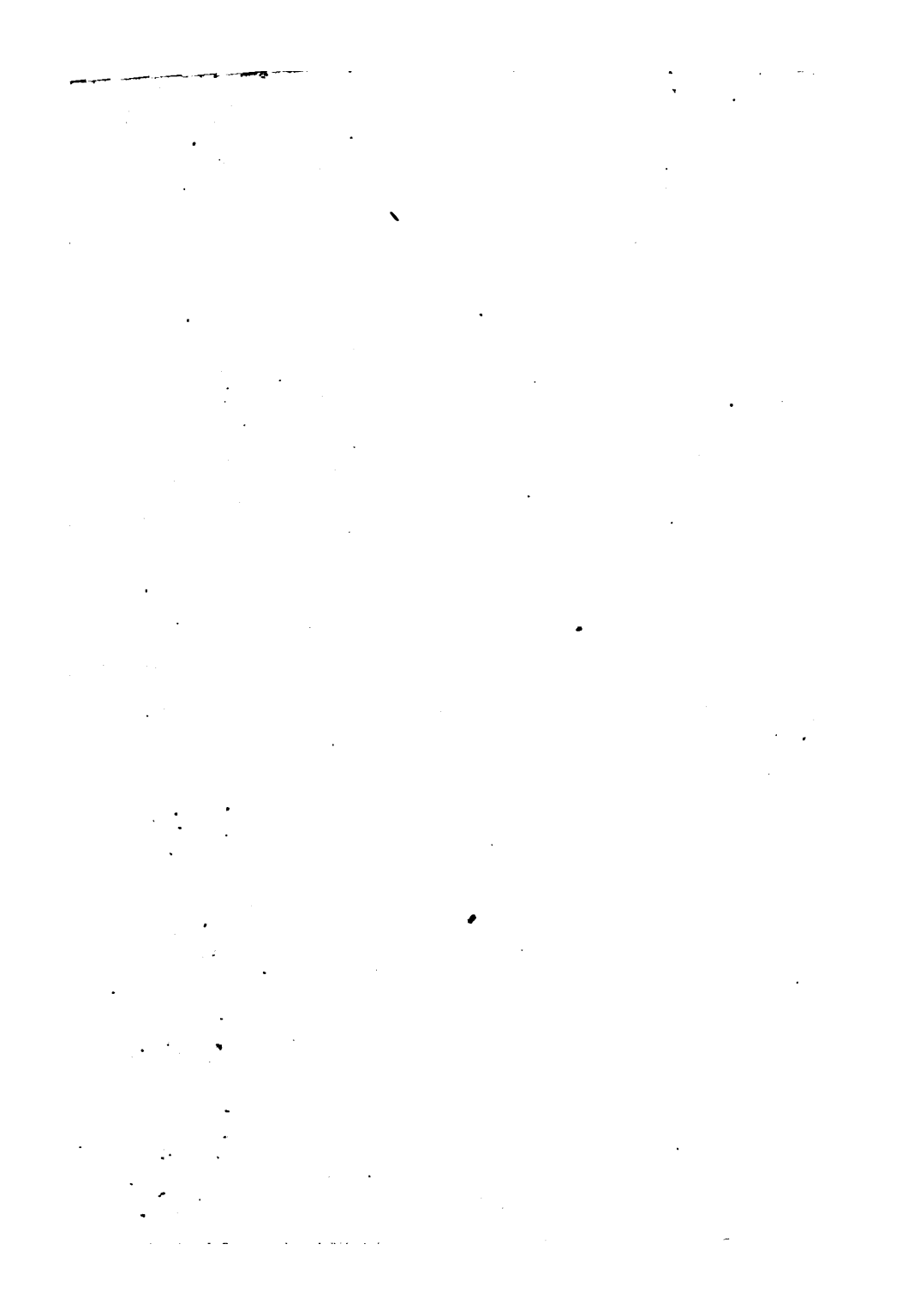
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UNCLE ANTONY'S
NOTE BOOK



BY
MARY CAUMONT







6000878365

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

UNCLE ANTONY'S NOTE BOOK.

BY
MARY CAUMONT.



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PREFACE.

ONCE our Uncle Anthony, who is the essence of order and regularity, did a very strange thing. He went out and left his study-door ajar, his drawers wide open, and his papers and manuscripts all scattered about.

Then what did the children do, but stopped their play, and, darting in, laid their naughty little hands on a certain dog-eared, half-filled note-book, and rushed to me with their booty, for me to read it aloud to them.

Of course we all went first to beg Uncle Anthony's pardon for the raid we had made on his premises, and to ask his permission thus to examine his property.

thither, all these are softened into silence by the snow on Christmas Eve. Long icicles hang down from the street-lamps, from the roof-spouts, and form a crust around the city watchman in his heavy cloak, as he chafes his hands and stamps his feet to keep them warm, while his breath gets no farther than his beard until it is converted into frost.

The grocer's shop, the haberdasher's, the butcher's, and the baker's, keep later hours to-night. It seems as if their selling never would be done ; there is no night in all the year when their dazzling lights attract such a never-ending train of purchasers ; and the sight of these gaily-decorated, brightly-lighted shops with their busy throng of customers is the one cheerful feature in the city this cold winter night—one that makes you smile, and forget the nipping frost and the piercing north wind.

But by-and-by the last Christmas bargains have been made ; those that have had the money to lay out on a treat for to-morrow have laid it out ; one after another the gas-lights are extinguished, the shutters closed,

and the hour of midnight reigns calm and quiet over the silent streets.

More silent, more beautiful than the glistening snow, is the cloudless sky on this cold frosty night; a deep blue canopy, all bespangled with its myriad of stars, twinkling like diamonds, each with a brighter lustre, as if in memory of a midnight in the olden times, when "certain shepherds were watching by their flocks."

The clear full moon, too, has just risen, and where do her rays not penetrate? With a light more beautiful than noonday brightness, her beams are cast upon the old cathedral's lofty dome, the winding river with its many-arched bridges, the pinnacles and old church-spires. Her light streams down the broad quiet streets, down the narrow crooked lanes, and in through many a window. Here in one broad beam it enters the richly-furnished chamber, where the children of the wealthy citizen lie snug and cosy on their soft pillows, smiling as they dream of *Santa Claus* and Christmas gaieties; while there, a ray of the self-same light penetrates the iron grating of the prison-cell,

and falls upon the haggard features of the sleep-forsaken criminal, to whom the morrow brings no joyous prospects. Oh, if we could travel with the moonbeams to-night, go with them into every corner, peep as they do into every window, through every crack and crevice in the great city, now at this hour of midnight, what a maze of diverse destinies, of contrasting existences, should we behold !

But we *may* go, at least with one of those silvery rays, and pay a visit in a humble city home. We follow then the moonbeam as it strays down aslant the sloping roof of Old St. Barnabas, across the irregular tiling and crooked chimney-stacks of a densely-inhabited network of lanes, over a dead wall forming one side of Tenpenny Court, and in through a narrow window-casement on the second floor of a rickety abode on the other side. The light falls upon a woman's pale thin cheek bent downward over some fine stitching on her knee. Her long bony fingers move with a nervous agility, and from time to time she trembles involuntarily, for there is no fire in the little grate. The end of a tallow candle is flickering on the table ; it burns so

badly that the poor sempstress must strain her eyes indeed to thread her needle so often by its feeble light.

The ray of moonlight fills the little room, and shows all that it contains ; not much, as far as furniture is concerned—two rickety chairs, an old cupboard, a clothes-trunk, and a broken bedstead. But there are two little sleepers on the bed lying close together, with an old check shawl of their mother's thrown over them. Their little faces, too, are thin and pale, and bear a strong resemblance to the careworn-looking being who casts a loving glance upon them from time to time, while nimbly plying her needle and thread. But for these rapid hasty glances at the two young slumberers, who knows but that her courage might fail entirely? It is the sight of them alone that sustains the poor widow in the hard battle for life during these lonely midnight hours. But hark! What a sound was there! It comes from above, and seems to rend the very air. It echoes through the whole neighbourhood, and shakes the old house to its very foundation. “Ding, dong! Dong, dell! Ding-a-dong!” The woman,

startled and terrified for a moment, lets fall her work upon the floor, while one of the children starts upright, and cries out :

“Mother, mother, what is that?”

“Hush, Peter! do not awaken Sammy. It must be the bells of Old St. Barnabas ringing in Christmas morning.”

“Christmas! Tell me about it, mother; what do people do on Christmas?”

“Poor folks like you and me, Peter, don't have much out of the way on that day more than any other; indeed I don't suppose Christmas is much kept in Tenpenny Court at all. But rich people, Peter, have great goings-on to-day; turkeys, roast-beef, and plum-pudding for their dinners, and all that. And some poor people manage to have something extra, at least those who have enough money to spare. Long ago, when I was young, and lived in the country, Peter, we used to go to church on Christmas morning; and in the evening all the neighbours gathered into the old farm kitchen, and we had songs and games, and sometimes dancing.’

“Oh, how fine! Tell me more that you

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did on Christmas Day, and tell me about the country, mother !”

“Some other time, Peter, but not now. I must finish this shoulder-band, you know, as long as the bit of candle lasts.”

“Mother, will Sammy and I ever be able to keep Christmas Day ?”

“Indeed, my poor boy, I thought to give you both some surprise this time, and that is why I have been stitching late every night for a week past. But you see I haven't done. These shirts are not quite ready yet ; and if they were, it is too late now to take them to the wareroom. But, my dear, keep up your heart, maybe I shall have a little treat for you by New Year's Day.”

“And will the bells of Old St. Barnabas ring in New Year's morning, too ?”

“I do not know, my child ; you will hear when the time comes. Shut your eyes now, and go to sleep again.”

“But, mother, I cannot sleep ; it is so cold to-night, I can't help shivering.”

“Ah me, the candle has burnt out. Now, Peter, I can work no more to-night.”

II.

CHRISTMAS DAY.

THE bells of Old St. Barnabas had been ringing lustily for half an hour. The snow was carefully swept from the pathway in the old churchyard, the doors wide open, and a goodly congregation, rich and poor, were thronging together into that ancient edifice, to join in the morning service and hear a Christmas sermon.

The stately beadle, all importance, hovered about the vestibule, and conducted the stout old gentlemen in shining silk hats and double top-coats, and the ladies wrapped in furs and silks, to their different pews; but he quite ignored the existence of two little ragged, half-clad strangers, who, trembling with the cold, were peeping into the church through the open doorway.

"It's warm in there, Sammy," whispered Peter, "and there is going to be fine music, because this is Christmas Day. We must go in and get a seat, or stand somewhere."

Still the two remained shivering outside;

they were too shy to let themselves be seen beside so many well-dressed people.

There were *some* poor folk, however, attending Old St. Barnabas. There was Blind Roger Anderson from the poorhouse, and old Sally Larkin, who used to keep a stall near Tenpenny Court before she went into an almshouse.

“We may venture in with *them*,” thought Peter, and quickly caught Sammy by the hand, to profit by this opportunity.

But Blind Roger and old Sally were duke and duchess in the eyes of the pompous beadle, compared with the two unknown ragged urchins, and he pounced upon the latter accordingly, with “I say now, be off with you!”

Poor Peter! Since last night he had been planning this coming to church as a Christmas treat for little Sammy, and now it seemed they were denied even this. The child looked up in the beadle's face with an expression of mingled disappointment and reproach, which, though lost upon that stony-hearted functionary, did not fail to attract the notice of a looker-on, a pleasant-faced young man, dressed

in a yellow vest, a blue coat with brass buttons, and with a silver band upon his hat.

He quietly approached, and laying his hand upon the man's shoulder, said :

“Come, Mr. Beadle, a church is a church, you know ; there be free seats for them as can't afford to pay, and these youngsters don't look as if they meant to make a row.”

Little Peter felt quite overcome with gratitude ; but swallowing down with an effort a choking sensation in his throat, he tugged Sammy by the hand ; and boldly stepped in on the authority of the gentleman in the brass buttons, and marched straight on to take a seat beside Blind Roger and Sally Larkin.

In some places of worship the seat immediately under the pulpit is occupied by the choir, in others by the minister's family, and in others again by the poor. It was reserved for the latter portion of the congregation in the church of Old St. Barnabas.

Stationed then in so favourable a point of observation, the first half-hour of the service was spent by Peter and little Sammy in quiet

contemplation of the church and all the people. They noticed the garlands of evergreens suspended from the galleries and coiled round the great stone pillars ; then the large organ at the other end, the greatest enigma of all, with its whole array of golden pipes ascending by degrees to the very arched roof, and with its deep notes swelling out and making all the building tremble.

The next object of interest after the organ, was a pewful of beautifully-dressed children, who whispered together all the time, and passed sweetmeats to and fro, while beside them sat a young lady who seemed to have the charge of the restless little troop.

In another pew, at either end, sat a comfortable old married couple, their eyes closed and their heads nodding ; and between these two a younger pair, who had taken one another's hands, the better to enjoy the morning's devotion. Old maiden ladies, too, were scattered about in different parts of the church, some with scent-bottles, some taking off their muffs and furs and loosening their bonnet-strings, because they felt too warm ; and others drawing tight their shawls and

putting extra muffling on, because they felt a draught.

Right in front, with a large square pew all to himself, sat the great Mr. Plumtree, the most influential member of the congregation, and the oldest trustee of Old St. Barnabas. A well-dressed, well-fed, stout old bachelor was Mr. Plumtree, with a shining bald head set off with side locks of curly grey. He wore a spotless, ruffled shirt-front, and below his velvet waistcoat hung down a massive chain and seal. He wore a top-coat that would have amply covered half-a-dozen little boys of the Tenpenny Court kind, and it was so thick and stiff, it looked as if cut out of wood. Mr. Plumtree had top-boots, too, for the snowy weather, boots that must run up a pretty account for blacking, thought little Peter, for they reflected the very tassels that dangled from their tops. Indeed Mr. Plumtree seemed a very interesting personage to the two young strangers in the poor's pew, and they would still more have feasted their eyes on the sight of him, only that immediately behind him sat the pleasant-faced young man in brass buttons, and every time

they looked that way, they were sure to meet his gaze.

That his little brother Sammy might turn out a cause of anxiety to him during the service, had certainly never crossed the mind of the inexperienced Peter beforehand, or he might not have been so persevering in gaining admission. At all events the service was but half through, when Master Sammy's eyes had completed their second or third general tour of inspection; and now his little face assumed an expression of extreme disgust, his body fell into a yawning, stretching position, and he began to murmur, half aloud:

"I think we have had enough of this, Peter; won't it soon be over?"

Oh, who can describe the feelings of the elder little brother at this point of the proceedings! Surely only those parents and guardians who had forgotten the meaning of perpetual motion until they brought their nursery with them to the public worship.

Poor Peter's face turned scarlet; he thought that everyone could hear what Sammy said, and see his disgraceful gesticulations, from

Blind Roger to the very organist in the upper gallery.

"Sit quiet, Sammy dear," he said, "and you will hear more music in a minute."

"But I'm tired, Peter, and I want to go home to mammy."

"You mustn't speak in church, Sammy, for the life of you," whispered Peter in desperation. "Lean on me, if you are tired;" and then he put his arm, as he had seen his mother do, round little Sammy; and the latter, laying his head upon his shoulder, soon closed his eyes and fell fast asleep.

This was already a better state of affairs thought Peter, than before; and he himself would have been quite at his ease, but for two dreaded possibilities. One was that Sammy might begin to snore, and the other that on waking up suddenly he might commit some fresh impropriety. He held his arm round him therefore with paternal care, and sat listening to the Christmas sermon as calmly as he could.

He did not understand all that he heard, poor Peter! but what the clergyman said just at the very end was not above his comprehen-

sion, namely, that the collection to-day was to be devoted to the providing of winter clothing for the poor.

“I must tell that to mother when I go home,” said Peter to himself.

And now the plate was handed round ; it passed from one to the other, and everyone pulled out his purse to get a coin to lay upon it. Old Mr. Plumtree was a long time bringing his out of the pocket of his under-coat, and it jingled as he fumbled through it with his fat forefinger.

Peter was looking at him all the time. He watched him turn over many coins and at last bring forth a sixpence, and then hastily put his purse back into his pocket. Was it really the case, or did Peter only fancy that he saw, through the hinges of the half-open door in Mr. Plumtree's pew, a golden coin slip out of the purse and glide down over the old gentleman's knee to the soft carpeting at his feet ?

The service for Christmas morning was now at an end ; the congregation rose and began to move towards the door. Little Sammy was still asleep, and Peter thought it better

not to waken him until the very last. Every pew was empty then, as the little strangers sallied out from beneath the pulpit.

One of the first open seats they passed going up the aisle was Mr. Plumtree's. Peter glanced into it, and there on the floor beside the carpet buffet, bright and shining, lay a golden guinea.

The boy stooped and lifted it. Never before had he had such a heavy glittering piece of money in his hand, and he gazed at it wonderingly.

What will Peter do with that golden guinea?

III.

GOLDEN SQUARE.

MR. PLUMTREE lived in Golden Square, in a house with spotless steps, and bright brass knocker at the door, and deep areas below the windows. On Christmas afternoon this gentleman was dressed to go to a dinner-party. Having completed his toilet with the aid

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of Samuel, his servant-man, he now stood in his swallow-tailed coat, with diamond studs, and white cravat, waiting till the carriage should come round. Samuel had gone to see what kept the horses.

“I must see the butler at Sir Herbert’s,” thought Mr. Plumtree, at the same time opening his purse. And now for the first time he perceived the disappearance of the guinea, but little thought that he had left it in his pew at Old St. Barnabas’s. “Ho! ho! A guinea missing since morning! What a set these servants are! I declare a gentleman is nicely handled among them! Sent James about his business last week for trying on my new boots; had John discharged the week before for half-a-dozen sherry missing from the cellar. Try a man fresh from the country for a change, well recommended and all that, of course, with honest character; and the first thing is a guinea gone, indeed!”

Here he rang the bell violently, and at once came Samuel to the summons.

“Yes, sir; the horses are at the door, sir; the bay has had to be frosted, sir.”

“It wasn’t for the horses I rang just now,”

cried Mr. Plumtree in a sonorous voice. "They may wait awhile, till I settle another business first. You, Samuel, or whatever they call you, you see my purse there lying on that dressing-table, as it has been all the afternoon. I say, there's a guinea out of it since I went down to luncheon. Now tell me what you know about it, sirrah!"

"I was in the room laying out your dress-suit, sir, and I *did* notice your purse upon the table, sir; but I never touched it, much less took a guinea from it, sir."

"According to your own statement, then, you are the only one who could have taken it!" cried Mr. Plumtree.

"But I tell you I did *not* take it, sir" said Samuel, quietly; "there must be some mistake."

"Mistake! you villain! Do you know your master is a magistrate! Mistake indeed! Only that it is Christmas Day, and unfortunately I'm invited to Sir Herbert's, I'd send for a detective, and we should soon find out who has made the mistake."

"Indeed, sir, I am very sorry, but I know nothing about it," continued poor Samuel;

“nor was I ever accused in such a way before sir.”

“It’s a pretty plain case this time, though,” cried Mr. Plumtree. “I’m going out to dinner now, and I give you notice that if you haven’t found that guinea against my return, your name is WALKER!”

Having uttered these decisive words in a loud voice, the gentleman took his departure, leaving poor Samuel more miserable than he had ever felt since he had come to take service in the great city.

On account of the master’s dining out that evening, the lights were lowered in the upper windows of Mr. Plumtree’s residence in Golden Square; but a blaze of light shone through the area railings from the kitchen, where all the servants had assembled.

There was the cook, the housemaid, the butler, and the parlourmaid, with their respective followers, as well as the fat coachman and Samuel, the new lacquey. The blazing fire, the hearty supper spread upon the table, and the bunches of mistletoe suspended from the ceiling, all promised a jovial Christmas evening in the servants’-hall.

And to crown all, the parlourmaid's young man had promised to relate a genuine ghost story, and the coachman had volunteered a song.

Poor Samuel alone felt disinclined for mirth ; the occurrences of the day had rather thrown him into a silent, thoughtful mood.

The amusement in the kitchen was at its height, when some one said :

“ Hark ! was not that a ring at the hall-door ? ”

As nobody else seemed in a hurry to leave the comfortable room, it devolved on Samuel to open the hall-door. He saw no one there, however, and was just about to shut it again, thinking it had been a mistake, when a figure, just quitting the lowest step, turned back again, and approaching, said :

“ If you please, is this where Mr. Plumtree lives ? ”

It was a child's voice that spoke, and a child's face that Samuel beheld by the light of the hall lamp.

“ Why, I declare you are the little fellow I saw at the church-door this morning, and I seem to have known you all my life, I do.

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What do you want with Mr. Plumtree? he is not at home this evening."

"I would like to give him back some money that he dropped in the church to-day," said Peter. "I thought we might have kept it, we're so poor, you know; but mother said as much as 'twasn't ours, and bade me bring it here to Mr. Plumtree."

"Why, this is a most extraordinary thing," cried Samuel, with a beaming face; and seizing little Peter by the arm, he drew him in, and shut the door, and began to question him. "Tell me, my lad, what is your name?"

"Peter."

"That's the name of my old father in the country. And how many brothers and sisters have you?"

"Just one," said Peter; "little Sammy that you saw in church this morning."

"He's a namesake of mine, then," said the other, laughing; "they used to call me Sammy, up to the time that I went to service. And you say you're very poor?"

"I guess we are," said Peter, "or else mother wouldn't have to work so hard as she does."

More questions followed, until Samuel had drawn out as much of the child's history as the little fellow knew himself.

"And so you live in Tenpenny Court," he repeated at the end. "Well, wherever Tenpenny Court may be, I'll find you out some of these days, my boy, and pay a visit to your mother. As for the guinea, I shall give it to my master the moment he comes in, and tell him of the honest lad that brought it back, and whether he chooses to give you something or not, here's a shilling from myself. And mind, I mean to keep my word and come and see you, child."

"Do," cried Peter, looking back as he passed down the steps, "remember, Tenpenny Court!"

* * * *

A few hours later the carriage rolled up to the door with Mr. Plumtree from Sir Herbert's dinner-party, and now this gentleman called his lacquey to undress him. He had forgotten all the scene about the guinea, but Samuel lost no time in relating what had taken place. At first the master humphed and hawed, and was inclined to treat the

whole thing as the fabrication of an artful fellow, who thought it better to return the stolen money than to lose his situation. But all the time his master was undressing, Samuel spoke of nothing else but of Peter and his mother, and the poverty they were in; and ended by saying that he had promised to go and look after them.

“I hope you promised these people nothing in my name, sirrah!” cried Mr. Plumtree with great dignity. “That would be taking rather much upon yourself. I am in no way bound to help them, and I have no doubt the woman had an object in sending back that guinea; but I see through all these things. I don’t sit on the bench for nothing! Tenpenny Court indeed! It’s a very bad quarter, and ought to have been cleared away long ago.”

* * * *

When little Peter turned to run home that evening, he passed another house in Golden Square. It too, like Mr. Plumtree’s, had a broad row of steps, and areas below the parlour windows; only here every room seemed to be illuminated. There were venetian

blinds, but they were drawn in such a way that, by watching close beneath, one might see all that was going on inside. The window was a few inches open, and through this the sounds of music and of many voices were wafted out, and arrested the child's attention. He crept silently up the snowy steps, right beneath the window, and listened for some moments. What a buzz was going on, and laughing, like that of children! The child outside was bursting with curiosity to find out what it all could mean, and by-and-by, managing to climb up the railings, he knelt upon the upper bar, and held tight by the spoke at either side to get a peep into the room.

"Oh! oh dear! such a sight! Unless mother and Sammy were here to see this with their own eyes, I never could describe it to them," thought Peter.

It was a spacious drawing-room, all hung round with mirrors and fine pictures. Holly with beautiful garlands of flowers decked the polished woodwork and the chandeliers. In the centre of the room, reaching up to the very painted ceiling, was an immense Christmas tree, all illuminated

with wax tapers, and glittering with silver nuts and bonbons, while from its branches hung toys of every description.

Now this was a thing that Peter had never even heard of, and that filled him with amazement. The whole room seemed to be full of beautifully-dressed children, mostly in white, with gay sashes and floating hair. Peter did not know whether they looked more like fairies or angels, but there seemed to be no end of them, for their graceful little figures were reflected endlessly in the gilded mirrors on the walls. The music played merrily at one end, while the little ones glided about in joyous excitement, dancing and skipping round the Christmas tree. Then he saw some richly-dressed ladies and gentlemen come into the apartment: and one old gentleman lifted a tiny child, the most beautiful of all the throng, upon his shoulders, and approached the Christmas tree. And then the other children clapped their hands, while the little mounted lady handed down treasure after treasure from the magic boughs, and gave them to her young companions.

Peter would have gazed for ever, but that

his poor knees were stiff, and that his arms were tired of holding by the railings.

"I know now how the rich folks spend their Christmas night," he said, as he dropped down from his perch, and trotted home to his mother and little Sammy.

IV.

THE SICK ROOM.

THE next morning found Mr. Plumtree very ill. The doctor's brougham was at the door several times through the day, the bedroom blinds were lowered, the curtain drawn, a little table wheeled up to the bed-side, and covered with bottles and pill-boxes; the fire burning more quietly in the grate, and Samuel hovering silently about the room, in readiness to attend to the slightest behest of his master.

The patient all the while rolled restlessly from side to side, flinging his arms about, and moaning continually.

"Bring me the *Times*, Samuel, and read me out the city news!"

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But the willing servant had not read two sentences, till his master cried impatiently : “There, there! that will do. I’m tired, and want to sleep now.” Then the papers were folded up, and laid aside, and the invalid closed his eyes—but only for a moment.

He now started upright with, “Oh, these pains! these pains! Give me some more of that hot posset!”

The servant poured some into a cup, and reached it to his master; but the latter had not even touched it with his lips, until he pushed it off again, exclaiming :

“I won’t have it; it isn’t fit for a dog!”

Again he moaned, and again he rolled his head about the pillows, and then cried out :

“I heard some one ringing at the hall-door. Go down, Samuel, and find out who it was.”

When Samuel returned, after a few minutes, he ventured to suggest, in as mild a manner as possible, that his master’s ears must have deceived him, as no ringing had been heard below-stairs.

“There *was* ringing—I say there was!” exclaimed poor Mr. Plumtree, all excited; “and

whoever was there has gone away again ; perhaps a messenger from Sir Herbert's to inquire about my health. I say, Samuel, go down again, and see if anyone has been here this morning to ask about me ; and at the same time tell Richard to put a muffler on the knocker, for my nerves can't bear the least excitement."

As the news of his sudden indisposition, however, had not yet reached the ears of Mr. Plumtree's acquaintances, no one had called that morning ; and foreseeing what a blow to his sick master must be the news of this neglect, poor Samuel lingered on the staircase, pondering in his mind what answer he should give. But now louder moaning reached his ears from the sick-chamber, and calls of "Samuel ! Samuel !"

The patient had forgotten that he had sent his servant on an errand, and now began to reproach him with—

"Why did you leave the room, sirrah, without my permission ? You must not dare to quit me for a moment when I am so ill. Oh, these pains ! these pains ! Look out of the window, Samuel, and see if the doctor is

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coming. If he doesn't come at once, you shall have to go and fetch him. I think he means to leave me here to die!"

"Oh, sir!" cried Samuel joyfully, raising the blind a little and looking down into Golden Square, "I see the doctor coming, sir; his carriage has just now turned the corner. You shall be all right presently, sir."

And now a creaking of boots was heard upon the staircase, and in stepped a rosy, dapper little man, all puffing and panting, and bringing a whiff of cold air into the heated room. He drew off his glove, pulled out his watch, and then proceeded to feel his patient's pulse.

"Rather feverish," murmured the doctor. "You must see that your master is kept perfectly quiet," he added aside to Samuel, "and I shall send round a sleeping-draught from the apothecary's."

Mr. Plumtree remained very passive while his physician was there, threw his head back on the pillow, kept his eyes half-closed, and only heaved a sigh from time to time; but Samuel had no sooner returned from conduct-

ing that gentleman downstairs, than his bed-ridden master began to rail against the whole medical faculty as a body, declaring all physicians, surgeons, and apothecaries to be no better than a gang of quack impostors.

Such was the state of affairs in Golden Square that day and a great part of the next. On the second night, however, poor Mr. Plumtree began to grow delirious, and Samuel passed a dreadful time with him. He was decidedly very ill, and Richard, who did nothing now but sit at the hall-door announcing the latest bulletins, answered every kind inquiry with a mysterious shake of the head, and "Rather worse this morning; passed a very bad night," spoken in a hollow whisper.

The next event was the arrival of several of Mr. Plumtree's relations, nephews and nieces and distant cousins from the country, each one alarmingly concerned for his recovery. And they nearly all managed to push up into his sleeping-room, although the doctor had left strict orders that no one was to be admitted to the patient. These visitors remained a good while longer in the house than they probably would have done had

their dear Mr. Plumtree been able to receive them in his usual health.

After quitting the sick-chamber they assembled in the drawing-room, and there began to discuss the invalid and his affairs ; and the point on which they could not agree was, who should be called in first—another physician to hold a consultation on his case, or Mr. Plumtree's lawyer to make his will.

Finally it was arranged to summon the doctors first, and the lawyer afterwards.

* * * * *

That evening about nightfall, when the patient opened his eyes after a fitful slumber, he was surprised to behold three professional gentlemen by his bedside. He said nothing to them, but he knew that they were there ; he knew also that Richard was lighting up the library below for them, and he heard the murmur of their voices ascending through his bedroom-floor. And Mr. Plumtree had a pretty good guess what all this meant.

From that moment the sick man lay silent and thoughtful and perfectly quiet. He did not sleep all night, neither did he utter a syllable.

"Poor gentleman," thought Samuel, "he must be very bad indeed. I never saw a gentleman so entirely lose the power of himself as that, never! Only that I see his eyes move about, now fixed on the fire, now on me, I should begin to think he was gone, he lies so quiet!"

And so he *did* lie as quiet all the next day, so still that Samuel was quite puzzled, and the doctors did not know what to think, and the relations did not know whether it was not time to call in the lawyer.

And thus the last few days of the old year were dwindling out, and nobody knew whether Mr. Plumtree would live to see the new. Such thoughts, too, were passing through Samuel's mind, as he sat silently gazing at the glowing embers falling from the grate. It was night, and there was no other light in the chamber to show whether the sick man slept or not. The little cuckoo-clock upon the mantelpiece struck *twelve*.

At this moment the cathedral bells began to ring "Ding-dong! Dong-dell! Ding-a-dong-a-dong-dell!" and were echoed by the chimes from twenty church steeples, far and

wide, all over the city, the bells of Old St. Barnabas among the number.

“Samuel,” said Mr. Plumtree, from behind his coverlet, in a husky voice.

“Yes, sir,” said the young man, starting to his feet.

“A Happy New Year to you, Samuel.”

“Thank you, sir, and the same to *you*, sir,” responded the young man earnestly, feeling for a match to strike a light.

“I don’t require a light—you may put that out again,” said Mr. Plumtree, turning his face the other way, for there were tears in his eyes. “I only want to speak to you. What was all that you were telling me, Samuel, on Christmas night, about the little boy that brought the guinea here?”

Suppressing every sign of amazement, the lackey repeated to his master all poor Peter’s story for a second time, and then added :

“That child’s face and voice will always follow me, sir. They remind me of a little sister I once had, who afterwards went to town to service, sir, but the last we heard of her was that she had made a very bad marriage, sir, and was in great distress.”

"And, Samuel, you promised to go and see the poor child, did you not?"

"I did, sir, but you know that can wait till you are better, sir."

"But I *am* better now, and you shall go at once to Tenpenny Court. This is New Year's Day, you know. And take my purse, as it is, Samuel; there are two guineas in it, and some odd sixpences. You shall spend them all upon this poor family."

"Oh, my good master!" cried Samuel.

"There, there, that will do," said Mr. Plumtree; "but I tell you I am better, and, thank God, live to see another New Year's morning!"

V.

NEW YEAR'S DAY.

"COME here, my boy," said little Peter's mother; "this is New Year's Day, and I have got a treat for you, after all. Yesterday I received the money for the shirts, and I am giving you eighteenpence of it, Peter, to go

and buy yourself a New Year's present with." And she put a shilling and six pennies in his hand.

Little Peter flung his arms about her neck, and then cried out, "Mother, mother, what shall it be?"

He looked all round the room, at Sammy, at his mother, and then at the money in his hand, and quickly darted from the house.

"I will not spend it all upon myself," he said, as he emerged from Tenpenny Court. "No; I shall get something for Sammy with it, and something for my mother, and then—if anything remains—but mother first, she shall have something good."

And now his eyes began to scan the shop-windows with a new interest. But the poor little fellow felt sorely bewildered, and wandered from street to street, unable to determine what shop he should try, much less to decide upon an object. At first he was for something to eat, and lingered by a pastry-cook's window; but afterwards thought of something more substantial. At the end he made a bold dash, and walked right into a large draper's shop. There were a great many

people buying, and a number of young men serving behind the counter. But Peter, having his money in his hand, was determined not to be abashed. He marched up to a counter, and said, in rather a distinct tone, "Have you something here that would suit my mother?—I want to buy her a New Year's Box."

The bystanders smiled, but the gentleman behind the counter said, "How high do you wish to go, my little man?"

Peter looked at the money in the palm of his hand, and was doubtful as to whether he ought to answer that question.

"Well," said the other, "what sort of goods do you wish to buy?"

"Oh! let it be warm," said Peter, gazing about him. "I think something woolly would be the thing."

"Well, here is a woollen shawl at three-and-sixpence."

"Oh! that is too dear," said little Peter, shaking his head.

"Then take a muffler, or a cross-over, or one of these soft neck-kerchiefs. They are all cheaper."

The little fellow's eyes were fastened on a red knitted muffler with tassels. It was warm-looking, and, he thought, would brighten up his mother's thin white face.

"What do you want for the red one there?" he said, nodding in the direction of the muffler.

"Oh! yes. I advise you to take this article," replied the gentleman; "it is cheap, too. It was half-a-crown before Christmas, but now it is reduced to two shillings."

"Ah! but I have only eighteen-pence, sir," said Peter, sorrowfully, showing the money to the shop-keeper.

"Well, well, my little man," replied the other, good-naturedly, "I'll knock a sixpence off, because it's New Year's Day."

And now the thought of Sammy, and the balance that was to remain for a special treat to himself, passed through his mind. But again the sight of the scarlet muffler, and the remembrance of his mother's pale face decided him, and he laid down his money on the counter.

With his treasure under his arm, the child hastened home, and never slackened his pace

till he reached the precincts of Tenpenny Court. And now his little heart began to beat fast at the thought of the great surprise he was about to give his mother, and he could scarcely mount the crooked staircase, he felt so much excited.

But—What is this? Has Peter lost his senses, or has he come into the wrong flat by mistake? No, surely, for there is his mother and little Sammy. But why is there such a fire blazing up the chimney, and a gridiron, too, with beefsteak fizzing on it? And who is that sitting in the corner, smiling at Peter's bewilderment? Mr. Plumtree's man in Golden Square! Little Sammy is mounted on his knee, and plays with the gilt buttons on his coat.

"I say, Peter," the little urchin cries, "this is our Uncle Samuel. Didn't know we had a 'uncle, did we Peter?"

Uncles *were* a rare commodity in Tenpenny Court, so the lad's eyes might wellnigh burst from their sockets with astonishment at this, if at nothing else.

But there is no use our trying to describe that New Year's Day in Tenpenny Court, any

more than there was in Peter's trying to describe the Christmas Night he saw in Golden Square.

Mr. Plumtree's Samuel has found his sister, and the children a kind-hearted uncle. When the steak is fried to perfection, the old table is pulled near the fire, and covered with a clean white cloth; and such a New Year's dinner is spread out as the little ones never saw before. While doing justice to the hot potatoes, and the mince pies afterwards, the boys discover a pile of new winter garments lying on the bed, and a bag of coals behind the door. In the meantime Samuel has promised to spend the whole day with them, and to take them all, in the evening, to see the pantomime.

And now the conversation is at its height, all eyes are sparkling merrily, when a heavy footstep is heard slowly coming up the staircase. A tap is given at the door, it is pushed open, and there, filling the threshold, stands Mr. Plumtree himself.

"A Happy New Year to you all, my good people!" he cries, coming right in, and taking the mother by the hand. "And you, too,

my little customers of St. Barnabas! Didn't I see you both there on Christmas Day? Well, well," he continued more gravely, looking round him, "Tenpenny Court is not the best place, after all, to rear two honest lads like these in, and I think we must make a change this new year coming. If they are to turn out like their Uncle Samuel here, they must get the country air, ma'am. So I'll be back with you some of these fine mornings to arrange about settling you in a cottage on my farm, down in the country, which you will find commands as fine a view as any mansion here in Tenpenny Court. But I must be off now, for the doctor doesn't know that I am out. I fear I have disturbed your talk, so I will take my leave, saying as I did before, that I wish you all "A very Happy New Year!"

HANS RICHTER'S CHRISTMAS TREE.

I.

“ONE midsummer night,
When the moon was bright,
The fairies were dancing
With all their might.

“Whenever they laughed,
Whenever they sang,
All through the forest
Their voices rang.

“They wakened the robins
Asleep in their nest,
And robbed the old raven
Of half his night's rest ;

“They scared the young bullfinches
Out of their wits,
And drove the poor nightingale
Quite into fits ;

“ And made the brown squirrel,
Asleep overhead,
To start in his dreams
And fall out of his bed.

“ What mischievous fellows,
In midsummer weather,
The fairies become
When they frolic together !”

So sang little Hans Richter, one fine midsummer day, in the Odenwald Forest, and instinctively glanced around, as if fearing to be overheard by any of the tiny folk in question. Hans was a round-faced, light-haired little fellow, with blue eyes that looked out contentedly and kindly on all the world. He was as much at home, too, in the woods of the Odenwald as any little floweret that rooted itself by the stems of those majestic old pines and beeches, or as any birdie that hopped from branch to branch overhead. For did he not live with his mother, the widow Richter, and his little sister Paula, in a cottage close to the village of Tannenheim, which consisted of a cluster of houses nestled together, and almost hidden by the tall trees surrounding them ?

Little Hans had been a wood boy all his life, for his father and his grandfather before him had been foresters of the Odenwald. But neither the one nor the other was alive now, as Hans' grandfather had died years ago, and only the autumn before his father, the brave Johann Richter, had been accidentally killed under the weight of an immense tree, which he had been helping to cut down. Hans had been there at the time, and still remembered his father's last words to him: "My son, you must help your mother, and be a comfort to her, and take care of little Paula."

And so, from that day forward, he was not like the boys of Tannenheim, who cared for play and frolic and nothing else. No; on the contrary, little Hans Richter knew that his mother must be more poorly off now, and that she must have more troubles to bear than formerly; and so he tried to say pleasant things to cheer her heart, and always asked her what he could do to help her, and then he did it with a right good will, and found that pleasure came all the same. Sometimes he had to go out to gather a basketful of

chips and little fir-cones for the winter's fire; and sometimes he had to sweep away the snow from about the house, to make a pathway for his mother and Paula, and for Frau Liebman and Frau Gutfreund when they came to visit them from Tannenheim.

But when the summer-time came round it was pleasant in the wood. Then Paula was stronger, and could go out with her little brother; and they spent many an hour together, gathering pretty bunches of violets and baskets of wild strawberries for Frau Liebman, who bought them from the children for the purpose of selling them herself when she went once a week with eggs and butter to the market.

And when the way seemed tedious and long, or little Paula grew tired of gathering, Hans would tell her a tale he had learned from his grandmother, or sing a merry song he had heard from the village boys. Or if the day were hot, and they were both weary, the children would rest awhile at the edge of a little stream, and dip their feet into its cool, flowing water. Hans liked to have his tiny sister with him to bear him company; but if

it happened that their mother wanted her in the house, or that she was not well enough to go, then he went forth alone, and all the live-long day beguiled his way by singing to himself snatches of old songs.

Thus it fell out that he was quite alone that midsummer day, carolling that foolish little rhyme about the fairies dancing. He paused for a while, as we have said ; then his voice rose again with some other song, but once more stopped short, for this time he *did* hear something. Strange voices met his ear, and stranger laughter rang through the forest ; and, turning down an unfrequented green pathway to see where these sounds came from, little Hans suddenly observed through the trees a number of fantastically dressed people, all together in one group, some standing, some sitting, and some stretched out full-length upon the grass. In the centre a fire was burning, and a cauldron hung over it, which was being stirred by a gigantic female, dressed in a blue petticoat. A red kerchief half concealed her glossy black hair ; her complexion was quite bronzed by the sun, and from her wild, keen black eyes darted

now and then a glance of scorn or displeasure towards one or other of her companions. And these all seemed more or less to be under her control, for not even among the men was there one to match her in size or in temper. Indeed, all were apparently afraid of her; for when she raised her voice their laughter ceased and their talking was subdued; and there was one in particular who was in great awe of her—a little boy, who, when she called him to come and stir for her, obeyed with a cowed expression of terror, trembling from head to foot, and turning pale at every fierce command that fell from her lips.

All this Hans noticed from behind an old elm in the distance, and then said to himself, "Those people must be the gipsies," as indeed they were. Hans had often heard of the gipsies before; for when he was quite a little boy a party of them had encamped near Tannenheim, and, the house door being left open one day while his mother was out hanging up the washing, one of them had entered and had stolen away Paula's christening spoons.

The gipsy woman had her back turned towards Hans, whilst the others were for the most part casting hungry glances towards the cooking operations. He was just as glad that it was so ; for he did not want to be observed by the strange party, although his curiosity forced him to linger a while longer watching their movements. At length, however, Hans was seen peeping behind the old elm-tree by one of the gipsy group, and by no other than the little lad who had been set to stir the cauldron. He was a small-featured, delicate-looking child, with long, yellow, curly hair, and with pale cheeks. When he turned his eyes for a moment in the direction of the elm-tree, and met the gaze of the forester's son, both the children started and coloured. The little gipsy dropped the long pot-stick from his hand, and fixed yet a more earnest inquiring look at Hans.

“Poor little fellow! I wonder why he looks at me like that?” said Hans to himself, and then turned to retire before the other gipsies should notice him. But just at this instant a sharp cry fell on his ear, and when he looked back once more, he saw that the

tall woman had lifted the pot-stick from the ground, and was striking her boy on the head with it.

"Oh, what a cruel, wicked mother!" cried the little Richter, and bethought him of his own good mother at home waiting for him; and, filled with disgust and fear, he hastened away from the spot.

Once back to the more well-known parts of the wood, our little friend slackened his pace, forgot about the scene which had made such an impression on his mind, and began to fill his can with bilberries, all the while whistling as merrily as a lark.

"And now I must be going home," he said to himself at last. "It must be near supper-time, and mother and Paula will be waiting for me. So adieu, old blackbird, you are a very fine fellow, and I'll come and see you another day. But hark!"

"Little boy, good little boy," said a trembling voice beside him, and there, to Hans Richter's utter astonishment and bewilderment, stood the small lad before him, whom he had seen by the gipsies' camp-fire.

"Oh, do not run away from me! do not

leave me!" pleaded the child, with an imploring countenance, and clasping his little thin hands together.

"Where is your great tall mother, and all the others of you?" inquired Hans.

"Oh, I slipped away from them while they were eating," said the child, "and I heard your voice through the trees, and I have followed you. Oh! do take me with you, and do not let them get me again. They will beat me to death for running away. And oh!" he added, "I am so tired with walking all the time, and so hungry, and they are so bad to me." And then his tears fell so fast and heavy that Hans nearly wept too out of pity for him.

"Poor little boy," he said, "don't cry, but come with me, and I will bring you to my mother and my good little sister Paula, and at any rate you shall have some of my supper. Here, take my hand, if you are tired, and don't cry, for we shall soon be at home."

A few minutes after, little Paula, who was standing on the door-step watching for her brother, ran in to tell her mother that here came Hans and a strange boy with him.

The good woman's astonishment was very great when she heard how her little son had fallen in with his new companion; and at first she seemed rather displeased, and asked the young stranger if he had not better run back to his father and mother before the night should set in. But when Hans related the boy's pitiful tale, and pleaded that he had promised to share his supper with him, the widow's kind heart softened towards the little gipsy, and she bade him come and be seated at the table with her children.

The gipsy-boy ate as if he had not had a good meal for many a long day before, and little Paula, seeing how hungry he was, slipped him some sliced potatoes off her plate, and Hans offered him the half of his glass of milk.

So the little stranger was hospitably received by the children, and enjoyed a good supper, which being no sooner over, than, tired and wearied with walking and crying, his head dropped down on his breast, his eye-lids closed, and he fell into a deep sleep on the chair.

Frau Richter beheld him with a puzzled look on her face. "See, Hans," she said,

“he is asleep! Now what are we to do with that child?”

“Oh, mother, let him stay with us! do let him stay!” whispered Hans. “He shall have half of my bed, and he shall wear my clothes that are too small for me.”

“Oh, mother, do keep him—do keep him!” urged little Paula, with tears of compassion in her eyes; “he shall have my share at dinner and supper-time, and I will learn to knit stockings for him.”

“Oh, do not put him out!” pleaded both together.

“Dear children,” answered the widow, “I wish I knew what to do. It is so late now that it is better we allow him to rest here, but to-morrow morning I must ask my good friends, Frau Liebman and Frau Gutfreund, what they think of the matter, and be guided by their opinion.”

Accordingly there was a general consultation the next day in the cottage over the fate of the poor gipsy-boy. Frau Liebman declared his coming there was only a trick played by the boy's mother to get rid of him. But Widow Gutfreund exclaimed: “Can that be

a gipsy's son? Why, he is as fair as our Max!" And then the three women whispered together, and now they nodded their heads at each other, and now they looked at the child, their conversation being interrupted by the renewed entreaties of the two children, as well as those of the young stranger himself.

At length the friends took their departure, and then Hans' mother told him that she meant to allow the gipsy child to remain with them until his parents should come to claim him.

"And now, little boy," she said, "what is your name? If you are going to stay with us, what are we to call you?"

"I don't know," said the child. "*They* always called me Beppo. I suppose it must be that."

"Beppo!" cried Hans, in astonishment; "there is not a boy in Tannenheim goes by such a funny name."

But little Beppo's soon became a well-known name in the cottage, and in the village too; and when the little fellow was clean-washed and dressed in some of Hans' old

clothes, neatly mended, and was well cared for every day and kindly treated, his face shone bright and happy, too, like the little Richters', and all the neighbours remarked what a lovely boy he was.

II.

THE time slipped by, and no tall gipsy woman came to claim her little son, and so the days became weeks, and the weeks months, and the green of the forest trees changed into a thousand shades of autumn brown, and Hans and Beppo and little Paula had become merry companions together. They talked and laughed and sang together; they frightened the squirrels from branch to branch; they tamed the thrushes and the robins with crumbs; they gathered blackberries and hazelnuts together; they worked together and they played together. And little Beppo learned to sing and whistle like Hans, and to be obedient and kind like Paula.

By-and-by, when the long evenings came

and the night set in early in the forest, the little family in the cottage spent their time more indoors. Then the candle was lighted, Frau Richter took up her needlework, Paula learned to knit, and Hans brought out his slate and his reading-book, as had been his custom the winter before, to have a lesson from his mother. In this way he had learned to read tolerably well for a boy of his age, and his mother hoped some day, by pinching and saving, to be able to send him to school. And while she strove to impart to her boy what she remembered having learned herself when a girl, the kind woman did not overlook the gipsy lad who had sought refuge under her roof. While Hans worked silently at his slate, she drew little Beppo to her knee and taught him his letters for the first time.

And thus the winter wore quietly on. Busy out of doors and busier within, they were very happy. Hans especially was making great progress, and of late he had been seized with a desire of learning more. One thing only seemed to cast a shadow over the widow's calm face and to give her many an anxious thought. The times were very

hard, food and clothing were dearer than they used to be, and she was much poorer than in former days. The widow could not see any prospect of sending her boy to school. She could not but heave a sigh sometimes over the bygone times when her Johann was alive, and when she had been able to give her little ones many a treat, which she must now refuse them. Every Christmas and New Year before had the children received their little presents and sweets from a tree lighted up for them by Santa Klaus. But this year, when Hans asked his mother how they were going to keep the festal time, she drew him aside and explained to him that things were changed now, and that this year they must go without any Christmas merry-making, as they had not enough money to afford it.

Hans, who was a wise, brave boy, heard all this without a word of complaint ; but Paula, who was younger and of course more childish, could not help shedding a few tears over her disappointment.

And now Christmas times began to be talked of by the boys in Tannenheim ; and one of these days an occurrence took place

which was deemed a subject of the greatest interest in their small world. This was nothing less than the arrival of Max Gutfreund home for the holidays. Having lived for three months in Frankfort with his uncle and aunt, who sent him every day to be taught with the town boys at a good school there, you may be sure Max was a great man by the time he reached Tannenheim.

His former playmates gathered round him, asked him questions, and looked up to him as a great hero, while he related to them wonderful stories about the school and the busy life away in the city. Hans was there, too, swallowing every word that fell from his lips, and little Beppo, at the end of each pause, said "Yes, sir," which seemed to please him very much.

"I say, Max, is it very far to Frankfort?" inquired Hans, when he found him alone.

"Oh yes," said he, "it is a long way, but I walked it with my mother and Frau Liebman the first time I went; mother was taking me to my uncle's, and neighbour Liebman was carrying fruit and vegetables on her head to sell in the market there."

“And what else do they sell in the market?” inquired Hans.

“Oh, everything you could name,” said Max; “pears, apples, and nuts; eggs, butter, salad, poultry, and ginger-bread; fish and flowers; and coming home through the forest, I met many a cart bound for the Frankfort market, laden with little firs of all sizes for Christmas-trees.”

* * * * *

“Beppo, can you keep a secret?” whispered Hans the next night, when the two boys were in bed together in their little attic sleeping-room.

“What is it, Hans?” he said; “do tell me. I’ll not repeat it, if you don’t want me to.”

“Well then,” continued Hans under his breath, “if you will promise not to tell my mother nor Paula until it is all over, I will let you know something. Beppo, I am going to Frankfort. I have it all arranged and planned,” he went on, speaking very earnestly and very fast. “I will carry a Christmas-tree to Frankfort to sell, and I will get money for it, and so little Paula shall have her

Christmas after all. And she shall be so surprised, and so shall mother, for I mean to do it to-morrow, when mother is away all day washing in Tannenheim. I know the way to Frankfort now, for I have learned it all from Max Gutfreund."

"Oh, Hans! how fine, how fine!" cried little Beppo, clapping his hands; "and I will go, too. I can carry a small tiny tree, and then I, too, may get money to buy something pretty for dear Frau Richter. You must take me with you. You know I cannot be left behind, lest when Paula should ask me where is Hans, I must let out the whole secret."

"If you think you can walk so far, you may come with me," said Hans, "only we had better get to sleep now, or we shall not awake in time."

But it was late ere the two little heads, so full of excitement, could be composed to slumber.

In the morning Hans was awake early, before it was daylight, but his young companion still slept profoundly, his curly head thrown back on the pillow, and a sweet smile playing on his rosy, dimpled face. When Hans roused him at last, with many little

pulls and pushes, he opened his eyes wide, and cried out: "Oh, Hans, I've had such a nice dream! We were in a gorgeous palace, with high pillars, and a beautiful angel, with a lovely face, looked down at us; and she took me in her arms, and kissed me, and called me some other name, not Beppo."

"What name?" interrupted Hans.

"I do not remember it now—it has gone out of my mind. But, dear Hans, it was so bright and so——"

"Oh, come," said Hans, "don't tell me any more now, for I haven't time to listen. You can tell me it all again. Mother goes out soon after breakfast, and then you must be ready to come away with me."

* * * * *

It was the middle of the winter season, two days before Christmas; the newly-fallen snow lay on the ground, and a mass of thick grey clouds hung like a veil in the air. In the Odenwald Forest, the twisted oaks, the tall fir-trees and the majestic pines stood covered with icicles glittering like a thousand diamonds. Their leafless branches looked as if some fairy had come with a magic wand

and tipped them all with silver. The paths were white with hoar-frost, and one could see far through the forest now ; and here and there many a humble cot was discovered, which had been hidden from view by the summer foliage and clustering underwood. The woodman's axe resounded in the distance, and the cracking of the waggoner's long whip-lash, as he urged on his horses, labouring under a load of newly-levelled timber. Close at hand a solitary-looking magpie was reading the Riot Act to half-a-dozen noisy sparrows quarrelling together, when one and all were put to flight by the approach of footsteps, and the clear singing of two well-tuned little voices :

“ What so white as the driven snow ?
What so red as the robin's breast ?
What so sweet as the nightingale's song,
When he sings his love to rest ?

“ What so dark as the raven's wing ?
What so keen as the falcon's eye ?
What so swift as the fox's foot,
When he hears the hounds close by ?

“ Brave King Ulric's brow was as dark,
And the glance of his eye as keen ;
Swift as the fox sped Ulric's steed,
When he sought for his lady queen.

“ *She was fair as the driven snow,
Her lips as red as the robin's throat ;
And whenever she spake, Queen Margaret's voice
Was sweet as the nightingale's note.*

“ *All through the woods of Odenwald
King Ulric sought her many a day,
For elves had enchanted the queen
And cunningly led her astray.*

“ *But the fairies pitied Queen Margaret's plight,
And they feared for the king's despair,
And met to break the mischievous spell
Which had bound the lady so fair.*

“ *A wind waved through the forest boughs,
And shook down the foliage green :
Queen Margaret saw brave Ulric then,
And the king found his beautiful queen.*”

To be sure, it was Hans Richter and little Beppo, the gipsy-boy, marching merrily along, each bearing a young fir-tree on his shoulders. By-and-by the path through the forest grew broader, and led through spaces of ground where the trees, being felled, allowed the broad daylight to stream down from above. Hans guessed that they must be soon approaching the edge of the woods, and that he should get a sight of the open country for the first time in his life. On and on they trudged

together, wondering what the town would be like, and planning how they would lay out the money they should receive for the trees.

But after a while the gipsy-child began to lag behind, and he could not help complaining that his back was weary of its burden. Hans tried to encourage him by every means in his power, but soon he saw that it was all in vain, as he too was beginning to feel rather fatigued.

So it was arranged that Beppo should leave his tree behind in the wood, and from time to time help Hans to bear the weight of the larger one.

And now they were on the open high-road to Frankfort. A long range of snow-covered hills appeared in the distance, and sloped away towards the western horizon: but through the landscape, in the foreground, the frozen waters of the Main peeped winding in and out like a silver thread.

At last Hans Richter uttered an exclamation of joy, as the high roofs of Frankfort appeared in view, and above the church-spires and pointed gables he could distinguish the

lofty dome of the cathedral, of which Max Gutfreund had often told him.

“Come along, Beppo! A little more courage, and we shall soon be there,” he cried, joyously. But first there was the river to be crossed, and as there was neither bridge nor ferry at that particular place, the boys did not know exactly how to manage, and wandered up and down the bank in some uncertainty. At length, however, the difficulty was solved by the arrival of a country-woman, walking erect with her hands rolled up in her apron, and three large baskets piled on a little cushion on her head. She marched across the river, and then Hans and Beppo, seeing that the ice was quite strong, followed her example.

III.

“I SHOULD not wonder if that woman were going to the market,” said Hans; “suppose we follow her?—it will save us asking the way.” Now this was a wise thought of the little traveller, and it had been still wiser if he

had strictly carried it out. But when he and Beppo came right into the streets of Frankfurt, very soon the novelties there attracted them both, so that they quickly lost sight of their guide with the baskets. The shop-windows were full of pretty things for Christmas and New Year. And how these attracted the little wood-boys, to whom everything was so new! They gazed enraptured at one window all lit up with wax tapers, and with bon-bons and toys of every description. Little sugar men and women were there, and dancing figures, images of chocolate, and dolls of all kinds. Other windows were hung with pictures, and books with the most beautiful covers, green, blue, orange and gilt.

“Oh! Beppo, isn't this a grand place?” said Hans; “wouldn't you like to live here? just look how many carriages are painted bright yellow!”

“What is going on there?” said Beppo, as they came to an open square filled with stalls all decorated, where toys and sweetmeats of every description were being sold for the coming festival. There were shows

there too, dancing clowns, and monkeys pretending to box, and merry-go-rounds, all of which amused the children so much that they stood watching without knowing how the time was passing, and Hans quite forgetting that he carried an unsold Christmas-tree on his back.

By-and-by, however, the lads remembered why they had come to Frankfort; and now they began to inquire the way to the market.

Having arrived there, they found it just as Max had described, but so full of people that Hans said, "Surely now we shall get someone to buy the Christmas-tree." So he placed the little fir on the pavement, and he and Beppo stood up beside it, expecting soon to meet with a purchaser.

Poor little fellows! The market was full; there were many sellers and many buyers, but not one looked their way. All day long the moving crowds came and went—men pushing hand-carts laden with fruit; boys with bags filled with nuts; women and girls with eggs and butter; ladies filling their reticules, and emptying their purses; housekeepers and servant-maids laying in provisions—while a

confused murmur of voices hummed all round, "Where's my change?" "Fresh in this morning." "Six-and-thirty, eight-and-forty." "What'll you have, sir?" "Couldn't at the price!"

But still the two little boys stood there, unnoticed and alone in the crowd; until at last little Beppo began to shiver with the cold, and Hans felt very hungry; and as one hour wore away after another, their faces grew very dreary. And when the clouds gathered, and the day darkened, and some of the women lighted the lanterns at their stalls, then Hans began fully to realise the sad position they were in, and to think that after all he had acted foolishly in coming to Frankfurt. He remembered how far he was from home, and how late and dark it must be ere he could find his way back, and how anxious his mother and Paula must be.

And then when he beheld his poor little Beppo, trembling with cold, hunger, and weariness, beside him, he could not keep the tears from coming into his own eyes, and he looked the picture of despair.

In his misery he breathed a little prayer

his mother had taught him to repeat as a little child when he was afraid at night ; and then, with a heavy sigh, he said to his weeping comrade, "Come, Beppo, it's no use ; we can wait no longer ; nobody wants to buy our tree."

Just at this instant the light from a lantern hung over a stall close by, streamed on their sad faces, and drew the attention of a comfortable-looking housekeeper wrapped up in a thick shawl and knitted hood. She had a basket on each arm, and was getting fruit and vegetables from the stall. When she saw the children, however, she turned from her bargaining, and asked Hans what was the matter.

"Oh ! kind madam," he said, "will you buy a Christmas-tree ?" and then he burst out with the whole story of their journey from the wood, and of the ill-success they had had that day.

Now the woman was a kind-hearted soul, and her good-natured face looked so pleasantly at little Hans that he went on with his entreaties for her to buy.

"Well, you know," she said, turning to the

fruit-woman, "my lady is so poorly, and at these times she and master both fret so much that we had arranged to have no Christmas-tree ; but the children, poor dears, are sorely disappointed not to have as gay times as their little friends. So, in spite of old nurse, I do think I will buy this tree, and give them a little surprise in the nursery. But my arms are so laden that I can carry nothing more, so if you wish to sell your tree, little boys, you must carry it home after me."

"That I will," cried the little wood-boy with a grateful voice, and having taken heart again, he raised the little fir once more on his shoulders, and prepared to follow the footsteps of the friendly housekeeper. Little Beppo too, gathered up fresh courage, and trotted along by Hans Richter's side.

Their way led them at first through long narrow streets of lofty old houses, with pointed gables and the upper storeys projecting out over the lower; then through large squares with stately statues in the midst; next past beautiful gardens with ice-covered ponds, and bushes glittering with frosty crystals. Then they passed by gorgeous

dwellings of the rich, and at last they came to one more beautiful than the rest. It was a stately mansion with broad steps leading up to an elegant porch, supported on each side by majestic stone pillars. Hans felt overawed by such grandeur, and at first hung timidly back ; but when the housekeeper beckoned them to follow her, he and Beppo both went in.

They followed her inside through sundry halls and passages, till they stood before the bright stove of a cheerful, large kitchen, whose shining copper and brazen utensils hung round the wall, reflected the faces of the two young foresters, and the green boughs of the little fir-tree.

“Come now, put down your burden, and wait till I give you something to eat,” cried the woman, bustling about, “for I guess by your looks you are both very hungry.” And with that she placed before them each a large slice of bread and a bowl of steaming soup.

Having thanked her with their looks as well as their words, the little boys began to eat heartily. In the meantime both the cook

and the housekeeper were moving about the kitchen, when by-and-by a third female made her appearance, in the figure of the old bent nurse of the family, who, it seemed, was deemed an important personage in the household. She had some conversation with the housekeeper before she noticed the presence of the little strangers.

"That is a fine boy," she said of Hans; but when her eyes fell on the little gipsy, Beppo, she started back with an exclamation of surprise, then bent forward, and gazed earnestly into his bewildered face. "The saints be praised! What is this, what is this?" she cried. "Come with me, little boy; come with me quickly. And you too," she added impatiently, nodding towards Hans, when she perceived that he was unwilling to leave him.

She led the children up a spacious staircase, and through a long gallery adorned with pictures and statues, which all the while seemed to their wondering eyes like an enchanted fairy palace. Little Beppo whispered to Hans: "This is what I dreamed of last night."

At the end of the gallery she pushed back a curtain, gently opened a door, and glided into a richly-furnished apartment, motioning the children to follow. They entered, and there before them, on a sofa, lay a lovely lady in a black silk flowing robe, with cheeks of ashy paleness, and eyes drooping heavily with a mournful expression of sadness in them. The nurse whispered something in her ear; she raised herself with a sudden start of surprise; her colour changed; she gazed at the little gipsy, and then with a scream of joyful astonishment. she rushed forward and caught him up in her arms, and covered him with kisses.

“It is our Wilhelm!” she cried. “It is our “Helmchen come back! O my son, my son! thou art found again!”

Presently a gentleman came into the room, and with an expression of wonder and joy drew the child towards him, and examined his face very closely, while the old nurse came forward and insisted on laying bare his arm to show an unmistakable mole which was discovered close to the elbow.

“God be praised! we have really found

our Wilhelm!" said the gentleman with much emotion, as he pressed the boy to his breast.

By-and-by Hans was closely questioned; and he related exactly all that had occurred since the day when he first had seen the little Wilhelm in the midst of the gipsies' encampment.

"And now, my brave lad," said the grateful father, "how are we to repay you and your good mother? for we are greatly indebted to you both."

"We do not want payment, indeed, sir," said Hans. "Mother and Paula will be so glad that his name is not really 'Beppo,' but 'Wilhelm,' and that he has such a beautiful mother, and not the cruel, wild gipsy woman. I must run home and tell them all about it. Do let me go now, please, and only promise that you will allow Bep—Wilhelm to come and see us sometimes."

"Well, at any rate, my little man," said the gentleman, "I shall provide for your education at the best school in Frankfort, and your mother shall never know want as long as I live."

"And we will send for them now," inter-

posed Wilhelm's mamma, "and the children shall have their Christmas all together!"

* * * * *

In the meantime a heavy snow-shower had begun to fall outside; a cold winter evening had set in, and away in the wood, by the little village of Tannenheim, and by the forester's cottage, the blustering wind howled through the trees, which creaked dismally at every blast.

A light was burning on the table, on which an untasted supper was spread. Little Paula's face was pressed against the window-pane, and the tears trickled down each cheek, while she murmured repeatedly:

"Where is Hans! Where is Beppo? Oh dear! oh dear! they are lost in the snow."

Widow Richter had gone to the village again to inquire in each house for the missing children, but all in vain. Then she wandered through some of the paths, calling their names; but no answer came. And at last she returned to her desolate home, threw herself down on a chair, and covered her face with her hands, with a heart-sick feeling of blank despair.

"Oh! mother, mother, don't cry!" sobbed

little Paula. "Perhaps they will come yet. Hark, mother! What noise was that there? I hear wheels, and I hear Hans' voice!"

And so it was, indeed; for at this moment a carriage with two horses pulled up at the widow's cottage door, and Hans alighted, followed by little Wilhelm's papa, who had come himself to thank the good Frau Richter.

And little Paula had her Christmas after all. The very fir-tree that Hans had carried from the wood into Frankfort was gaily illuminated with wax tapers. Beautiful presents for each one hung from its boughs, and when the folding-doors were thrown open, and its beauty appeared for the first time, little Wilhelm and his newly-found brothers and sisters, together with Hans and Paula, danced around it, and sang in merry chorus:

"Happy Christmas, come again,
Bringing gladness in thy train;
Brothers, sisters, reuniting,
Every heart with pleasure lighting;
Laden with enough good cheer,
To last throughout the bright New Year,
Happy Christmas, may we never
Fail to praise thy gracious Giver!"

DAISY'S VISIT TO THE FAIRY GROVE.

It was a bright midsummer day, with not a cloud in the sky ; the roses were in full-bloom in the garden, the hay was spread out on the meadow, and the fat milch-kine in the pasture basked in the sunshine. The bees hummed from blossom to blossom, the butterflies chased each other idly over the fragrant flower-beds ; while the great cock in the farm-yard found it almost too hot to crow, and Cæsar, the mastiff, who dozed in the door-porch, would only exert himself to move from time to time farther into the shade.

All the while little Daisy lay very ill in her tiny cot, in a darkened room, with the blinds drawn down and the window raised just two inches to let in a breath of air from the garden. She had been tossing about restlessly for many days and nights, flinging the

blankets aside, crying out for water, begging her mamma to stay constantly by her, and asking many times why Florry and Harry, and Willy and Charlie didn't come to play with her, and why she mightn't have "dear little baby" in her arms only for an instant.

To-day the doctor had been there, and he had said something to Daisy's mamma; and Daisy noticed that her mamma's eyes were red, as if she had been crying, and Daisy, who was a good little girl, said to herself:

"Poor mamma, she looks so sad and weary, I must try this time to lie quiet and keep my arms below the coverlet to please her, and give her ever so little trouble; but, oh dear! it's hard to be shut up here such a lovely day, and not to be out playing with Florrie and Harry, Willy and Charlie."

Her mamma had been called out of the room, and had not yet returned, when Daisy, who was gazing at the blue sky through the tiny space afforded by the open window, saw something move—a little object that darkened the space below the window, that hopped to and fro, and at last peeped in at her.

Daisy's Visit to the Fairy Grove. 77

It was a little brown sparrow, and he chirruped and said :

“Oh, I know you! You are the little lady who used to throw out crumbs for us in winter. I remember your face. But why are you sleeping in bed this beautiful day? Come away with me, and I will take you to the Fairy Grove. There is to be a grand entertainment there to-day, and all the birds are going.”

In a few minutes Daisy found herself out and away with the little bird, away past the farmyard, the garden, and the meadow, and on to the open field that led to the woods. And when they came near the sparrow's house, he called out his four young ones, “Cheepie, Peepie, Creepie and Sleepie,” and introduced Daisy to them as the good little lady who had hindered two enormous creatures called “Harry” and “Willy” from destroying the nest in the springtime. The little birds chirruped their thanks as well as they could, and then they all set out together towards the Fairy Grove. Presently they were joined by the other sparrows of the neighbourhood, and soon a great deal of twittering was heard,

arguings and disputings as to the road they ought to take, for it appeared that they had one or two calls to make, and some transactions to perform on their way to the great ball and concert at the Fairy Grove.

They came now through a fine orchard, at the end of which stood a whitewashed house with one magnificent cherry-tree trained up the gable-wall. The cherries hung red and luscious; and when the birds beheld them, they fluttered their wings and grew greatly excited, and one and all chirruped forth: "That is the house where the Wicked Man lives. He keeps two sons, who sling stones at us and rob our nests in the spring. He has a gun, and a trap besides; and once a starling, who made bold enough to go down his chimney, walked through his parlour, and came back with the most heartrending stories of stuffed birds in glass-cases and thrushes in cages. Oh, he deserves to be punished!" And one and all they flew at the bright red cherries, picking at them with their little beaks till nought but the bare white stones were left hanging to the stalks.

Then, greatly satisfied with what they had

done, they continued their journey, and soon were joined by many other birds, all bound for the grand ball and concert at the Fairy Grove. There was the whole family Titmouse, who meant to dance a great deal; the Bullfinches, the Chaffinches, and the Thrushes; a funny old bachelor called Willy Wagtail, and another called Robin Redbreast in a crimson waistcoat, who came to accompany a demure little spinster called Miss Jenny Wren. The young Starlings were to come by another road, while the Swallow party were to arrive later in the evening in time for the best part of the concert, which was to be the singing of the Nightingales. All this Daisy's companions told her, as they hopped and twittered along by her side.

Then they all came through a beautiful park, and beheld the turrets and pinnacles of a stately mansion rise over the trees. And a low murmur, like a conspiracy, began among the birds, as the sweeping lawn and elegant façade of the residence appeared in view. "The Vain Lady lives there," they exclaimed; "and only think, she wears *feather-trimming!* She has it all down her dress and round the

edges of her parasol." And they groaned with horror and indignation.

"See there!" cried one; "there she is herself at the window! There she is, with the identical feather-trimming on her neck and sleeves;" and all the birds' heads turned in one direction, as they watched the lady step out to a balcony, and give directions to a servant-man dressed in livery, who bore a plant in a large wooden box painted green.

"Set it out here," she said; "the air is so warm to-day, it will be quite as well here as in the conservatory."

"Ah! that is her foreign tree," cried the birds, "and the young leaves have just come out. Wait till she goes into her drawing-room again, and we will punish the Vain Lady." And no sooner had the last bit of her skirt with the feather-trimming on it disappeared through the great French window leading to the balcony, than with one fell swoop all the birds flew at the foreign plant, and picked at the young leaves with their sharp little beaks till the branches were all stripped naked.*

* Founded on fact.

After that they hastened on their way, fearing to arrive too late for the grand ball and concert at the Fairy Grove. But first they had one duty left to perform. As they entered the woods they arrived opposite a pretty little cottage all covered with wild roses and honeysuckle. There lived a good kind-hearted old lady, whom the birdies loved, for all through the frost and the snow she had kept her window-sills covered with crumbs for them, and at Christmas time had regaled them with a great bunch of wheat, which she had got fastened to her gable-chimney just for the birds.

“We must not pass by without giving her a serenade,” they said; and at once there arose under the eaves of the rose-covered cottage such a warble that the good old lady herself opened her lattice-window, and with a smiling face thanked the sweet little songsters, and flung them out a handful of grain as a new token of her kind feeling.

After that they all went on their way towards the Fairy Grove. The sun had gone down behind the trees, and the time was drawing near when the grand ball and concert

were to begin. The birds knew that they were approaching their trysting-place, for they heard so distinctly the note of the cuckoo, which was to be the signal for the beginning of the festivities.

“And now,” they chirruped to Daisy, “we will lead you to the very centre of the Grove, to the good Fairy herself, who will give you a mossy seat to rest on, and wild strawberries and honey and sparkling water from the Magic Well to refresh you after your journey, while all the birds perform their part in the grand ball and concert.”

And when Daisy beheld the good Fairy, she thought to herself, “She is very like my grandmamma, that lives far away in the country.” And when the good Fairy spoke and said: “I think we had better close the window, for the evening air is rather cool, and those birds with their noisy twittering are disturbing the poor child in her sleep;” then Daisy rubbed her eyes two or three times, and opening them very wide, saw herself in her little cot, with her mother and her grandmother bending over her. And there was a real basket of strawberries and a jar of

honey on the table, which the doctor had said Daisy might have very soon, as she was now so much better.

* * * * *

Then came another bright summer day, when the bees were humming busily from blossom to blossom, when the light-winged butterflies chased one another across the flower-beds, and old Cæsar sunned himself in the door-porch, and the fat milch-cow in the meadow lazily whisked away the flies with her tail, and the big black cock was quite too lazy to crow in the farmyard, when little Daisy, wrapped in shawls, rode away with her dear mamma in grandmamma's basket-phaeton, away on, past the farmyard, the garden, and the meadow, on to grandmamma's cottage in the wood.

And there Florry and Harry, Willy and Charlie, and dear little baby, were waiting for her. There were many birds there too; and once, when Harry and Willy were tired of playing, and proposed to go a-birds'-nesting, little Daisy called them to her, and sitting down on the soft moss under the trees, she related to them the whole story of her *Visit*

to the *Fairy Grove*, of the wicked man who kept a gun and a trap, of the vain lady who wore feather-trimming, and of the kind old lady whom the birds serenaded every night—
every night.

THE BROWN PAPER PARCEL.

URBAN and his little sister Sylvia lived in a beautiful spot, known as Fairylands, far away in the country, along with their father and mother, Prince Felix and the Princess Amanda. They all were very happy together, for Fairylands was one of the loveliest places anyone could imagine. It was so large an estate that the Prince and Princess never thought of leaving it to go anywhere else, even for a day, and the young people had never yet seen half its extent. There were delightful gardens with shady paths and bowers, and sparkling fountains, and sloping lawns bordered in by groups of laurels and rhododendrons, and dotted over by stately yew-trees and cedars. There were lakes with

islands in the midst, where the large black and white swans glided majestically about, and where the gold-fish darted to and fro when Urban and Sylvia stirred the surface of the water with the oars of their tiny skiffs. There were the ploughed acres and pasturelands, and, beyond those, the forests, where nestled the farmsteads and the cottages of the tenantry of Fairylands.

The palace was in the centre of this rural scenery, a splendid mansion, furnished with all that the heart could desire. But Prince Felix was not over-fond of luxury, and so spent most of his time out-of-doors in manly exercises, breathing with content the pure air that blew across the hills and copses of his ancestral domains. Urban accompanied his father in winter to the hunt, and in summer to catch the salmon that leaped into the gulleys of the noisy river ; while Sylvia aided the Princess Amanda in feeding the pet doves, and in culling nosegays of roses, jasmine and myrtle, on the marble terrace below the palace windows.

All the servants and the peasants in and about the estate loved the good Prince Felix

and his family, and all the nobles through the whole land liked to come often with their ladies and children to pay visits to Fairylands. But what especially enlivened the existence of Urban and little Sylvia was the occasional arrival of the tradesfolk from the distant city of Thriftham-on-the-Ware with goods for the royal household.

Prince Felix possessed no town on his estates, and that was why the arrivals of the merchants from Thriftham were such a delightful novelty to the young people.

Once it happened that the Princess Amanda was receiving guests in her drawing-room, when a trader with his wares rode into the great courtyard, and was perceived by Urban and Sylvia. They hastened down from the balcony, where they were playing chess together, and at once entered into conversation with the dealer, who, following them into the corridor, began to unfold his patterns of silks and velvet and exquisite lace. These little Sylvia examined in transports of admiration, all impatient for her mamma to come; while Urban questioned and listened with open mouth and eyes to the account of the

great fair about to be held in Thriftham-on-the-Ware.

"Papa," cried Urban that night, when the family were seated with their guests round the supper-table in the lofty dining-hall, "why have we no city in Fairylands, like Thriftham? Oh! I should like to go to Thriftham, to see the fair and all the curious things they have in the city."

"And I should like to see more beautiful silks and satins, velvets and laces, and to buy in the lovely shops the merchant told us of this morning!" cried little Sylvia.

"Did your son never really see a town?" inquired the guests of Prince Felix; to which the latter replied, gravely shaking his head:

"No, never; but I mean to give him the opportunity some day."

"O papa, then let it be soon!" exclaimed Urban, "for indeed I am dying with impatience to try the town life."

Here the Princess Amanda joined her entreaties to those of her son, and finally the consent was given, and the next week appointed for the journey of the whole family to the remote city of Thriftham-on-the-Ware.

As the moment of their departure approached, the two young people could scarcely suppress their excitement; and so at the instant that they were to step into the large glass-coach that stood on the perron before the palace door, a very sad thing occurred. Little Sylvia, who in her joy came down the staircase dancing and skipping, missed her footing and fell to the bottom. Her shrieks brought the whole household to the spot, and they lifted her as tenderly as they could, and carried her to bed. Prince Felix ordered the glass-coach to be sent back to the stables, and declared that there was no question of setting out that day.

This was a terrible disappointment to Urban, who longed more than ever to behold the streets and the market-place of the distant city. His mother heard his sighs and murmurs, and from the sick-room, where she sat by Sylvia's bedside, she sent a message to Prince Felix begging him to permit Urban to go to Thriftham alone, and see what was to be seen, as it might be some time ere his little sister, who had broken her leg, would be fit to undertake the journey.

Prince Felix at last gave his permission, and the following day Urban started forth from Fairylands, accompanied by one or two domestics, and furnished with a purseful of money for his trip to town.

On quitting the demesne, he passed by a tiny porter's lodge, where lived an old woman all alone, who had been foster-nurse to Prince Felix. She opened the gates for Urban's equipage; and then, having recognised her young master, she hobbled out after him along the high-road, holding a parcel in her wrinkled hands.

"Hey! Master Urban!" she cried, "you must not leave Fairylands without taking this with you!"

Urban made a sign of impatience, and one of the servants exclaimed:

"Never mind her, she is an old witch; the whole countryside knows that, for did not the bridge over the river fall in when she went across it!"

"Oh yes! The bridge fell, and she is a witch!" responded the others, and they spurred on the horses.

But the old woman ran the harder, and cried the louder for Urban to stop.

“Let us see what it is, at least,” said the young man; and he bade his servants wait until the poor old creature, all breathless with running, placed a brown paper parcel in his hands. “Ah! such an ugly, mean-looking package!” cried Urban, scarcely touching it with the tips of his fingers. “It has the initials C. S. on the outside. Now what may that be for?”

“C stands for common,” suggested one of the attendants, as they took off the outer wrapper and found a similar brown paper underneath, also labelled C. S.

“But I will have nothing *common!*” cried Urban, angrily.

“Oh! take care of it, and do not lose it,” called out the old woman; “the poorest peasant knows the value of it.”

“But I am no peasant!” screamed Urban in hot indignation, and, snatching the brown paper parcel in his hands, he flung it on the road, so that it rolled away, and was lost in the dust raised by the carriage-wheels. The old woman then hobbled back to her cottage,

and Urban and his companions continued their journey.

“We have lost a great deal of time bandying words with that old hag,” said the young man. “We must make up for it now; let me have the reins, and I shall drive the horses in style.”

In a few minutes Urban was on the box, and the steeds were galloping full speed along the highway, all perspiring and foaming, while the vehicle swung heavily from side to side. This did very well for some time, as the road was a lonely one, and unfrequented by other travellers; but by-and-by Urban and his attendants perceived a little speck in the vista before them, which, as they approached, developed into the form of a tinker driving a donkey-cart.

“Clear the way for our horses!” cried Urban, in an imperative tone, as soon as the man was within hearing.

“Keep yer conveyance to yer own side!” yelled the tinker in reply.

“You are an insolent fellow!” exclaimed young Urban. “Make way, I say, for a nobleman’s chariot to pass.”

“One beast’s good as ’nother,” retorted the tinker, “and if ye come any nearer, I’ll take a wheel off yer coach;” after which he seized his cudgel, and, standing up in his cart, belaboured his ass till it galloped, now to the right, now to the left, in a zigzag fashion, to the great annoyance of Urban’s horses. But these were spurred on by their young master, and they darted blindly forward. The result was that in another instant the tinker’s donkey was thrown down, his cart smashed, and his begrimed face smeared with streaks of blood.

The man cursed and swore, and used very bad language, and then wringing his hands, began to lament the fate of his donkey, apparently quite regardless of the scratches endured by himself.

“Ye’ve killed my donkey, and she was a decent brute!” he cried; “and now what am I to do? How am I to earn my bread without her?”

Urban was shocked beyond measure at what had occurred, and, overcome by remorse and pity, pulled out his purse, and offered the poor tinker compensation for his loss.

"Here, my good friend!" he exclaimed, reaching him a handful of gold pieces, "take these to purchase a new donkey and cart."

"But she was worth a great deal," replied the man, mournfully shaking his head.

"Well then, take more," added Urban, thrusting the gold into his hand, "and buy yourself a beautiful new donkey."

After this, the young gentleman drove on at a more moderate pace, and ere he had reached the turning of the road, his servants exclaimed:

"It was a great deal too much money to give away to a rogue like that! See yonder, he is getting his tools out to mend his cart, and the donkey has got up and is standing watching him."

In fact, Urban perceived that he had been taken in, so, stowing away his purse with a serious countenance, he declared his intention of being more prudent in future.

By-and-by, as he and his party approached the vicinity of Thriftham, the highways became better, and at last they found themselves in a road bordered by trim green hedges and closed across by a toll-bar.

"What is all this?" cried the young driver

from his lofty seat. "Remove that pole at once, fellow, and allow a nobleman's equipage to pass."

"Your toll, if you please, sir," said the turnpike man, touching his hat respectfully.

"It is only the matter of a few pence, Master Urban," whispered the servants. "Better give them, and he will open the toll-bar immediately."

"And I declare I shall give no more money away till I reach the city," cried Urban, raising his voice. "I am not going to be imposed upon a second time. I am only afraid I shan't have enough for my expenses."

"Your toll, sir," repeated the official.

"Rather than allow you to take me in, sirrah," cried Urban, "I shall drive another way;" and so saying he turned his chargers' heads towards the meadows. With one bound the animals cleared the low thorn hedge, but the next minute found them struggling on the far side, with the coach stuck fast in a great miry ditch.

It was with the greatest difficulty that the servants and their young master managed to sprawl out of the drain. Two of the men

had sprained limbs, while Urban and the third had no worse inconveniences than a few scrapes and bruises, and mud from top to toe. As for the carriage, it was utterly impossible for them to extricate it, and they could get no help in the neighbourhood. It was decided, therefore, that one of the attendants should accompany Urban on horseback to the town, while the two others should return to Fairylands with the news of the accident.

And now, having taken a circuitous route by the fields, and having regained the high-road, Urban beheld the chimneys and steeples of Thriftham appear in view. His spirits rose as they crossed the little river Ware, and he heard the noise of the many mill-wheels its rushing waters kept in motion; and by the time he reached the thoroughfares of the busy town, and saw the crowds of people wending their way hither and thither, and the broad side-paths, the shop-fronts, and the booths of the great fair, he was in the gayest good-humour.

“The people seem all so nice here,” he remarked to his attendant; “see how they smile at me! They know, of course, that I

am the son of Prince Felix of Fairylands.”

“Alas! my young master, I doubt you are mistaken there,” returned the domestic. “As far as I can judge, the passers-by are diverting themselves at your expense, for, to tell you the truth, you cut a sorry figure this minute, with your hat all stained with clay.”

“Nay, then, if that be the case,” cried Urban, let us hasten to an inn of some kind to refresh ourselves, and to rest after the journey.”

The following morning, when our young hero wakened up and dressed himself in the hotel where he had spent the night, he came down to the general-room, and summoning the landlord to his presence, asked his advice on a subject that had occupied his mind from the moment he had opened his eyes. It appeared that from his bed he had caught a glimpse of the golden cock on the church-tower, glittering in the sun, and the same moment he was seized with the vehement desire of procuring it for his little sister Sylvia.

“She is so very fond of birds, and we have nothing like that in Fairylands, so I must have it as a present for my sister Sylvia.”

"But, my dear sir!" exclaimed the landlord, his eyes wide open with astonishment, "it is the weather-cock of Thriftham; it belongs to the town, and you should have to ask permission of the mayor and of the dean."

"But I will *buy* it," returned Urban; "and have it I must, for my sister Sylvia, who delights in birds."

"Then you must apply to the mayor," repeated the landlord; "but perhaps, young sir, something else would serve your purpose as well as the weather-cock on the church steeple, say, the balls in front of the pawnbroker's shop, or the gilt basin that hangs at the barber's?"

"Indeed, I might take them also," said Urban, meditatively, "as presents for my father and mother."

The news that a stranger had arrived in Thriftham, with the intention of speculating in pawnbrokers' balls and barbers' basins, soon spread through the town; and the consequence was that Urban found himself followed by a little crowd of street-boys, beggars, and idlers, curious to witness the bargain.

"These people seem to admire me very much," he observed to his attendant. "Poor things! It's not every day they have a son of Prince Felix among them. It is only a pity our glass coach was broken on the journey; in it I should have looked more princely."

"Oh! for mercy's sake, Master Urban, leave the balls, and the gilt basins, and the weather-cock," pleaded the man-servant; "how on earth are we to get them home to Fairy-lands?"

But Urban was fully determined to execute his purpose, and presently he and his throng of spectators halted underneath a row of large gilt balls outside a pawnbroker's shop. The proprietor of the establishment came out rubbing his hands, and, far from showing the least surprise, smiled most cordially and declared himself perfectly willing to part with his door-sign, at the same time naming a price, which caused the bystanders to mock and gibe. "Better buy some of the trumpery there in the window!" cried one. "Buy the pawnbroker and the pawnbroker's wife!" cried another.

Our hero was much too dignified to notice these remarks; he simply drew forth his purse, paid the sum demanded, and ordered his servant in a haughty voice to carry the golden balls to his hotel.

Among the spectators during this transaction was a barber, whose gilt basin swung over a shop-front, "just over the way." Seeing how the pawnbroker managed to dispose of the balls, he now in his own mind doubled the price of *his* basin; and when Urban arrived, began the bargain by seeming very unwilling to part with it at all. He feigned an air of the greatest astonishment, in fact, that anyone could dream of proposing such a thing.

But Urban was only the more desirous to possess the shop-sign. "My mother, the Princess Amanda, has nothing like it," he cried, "and what pleases us most at Fairy-lands are *novelties*. So, my good man, I must have it, cost it the double of what you say."

After this the crowd was divided into two parts, one following the servant-man, who in the worst of ill-humours carried these extra-

ordinary purchases to the inn, the other accompanying Urban to the fair, which was being held in another part of the city.

Once there, the young man was delighted with everything he saw, and soon began to regret that he had not more money in his purse to buy some of the articles exposed for sale, nor his servant with him to carry them.

"This time I must act very prudently," he thought, "if it were only to show those Thriftham folk that I can bargain with the sharpest of them."

At this instant a rough-looking dealer was bawling at the top of his voice, "Cheap! cheap! Everything at this stall for sixpence!"

"That's Cheap Jack, Master Fairylands, he's not the sort for you," cried a voice from the crowd.

But Urban, now assuming an old-fashioned air, murmured, "Who can tell that?— I say, my good friend," he continued, addressing himself to the dealer, "what's the value you put on that fine coat there, the red one, with gold buttons and tarnished lace?"

"It's dirt cheap," answered the dealer; "only sixpence! Buy it, my young gentle-

man, and put it on. It will fit you to a T, and gain you the glances of all the bonny ladies in Thriftham."

Urban had a great admiration for the coat from the moment his eyes fell on it. The bright colour, and the fine trimming, though somewhat tawdry, pleased his fancy, and the flattering speech of the dealer now decided him altogether in its favour. He purchased the gay-coloured garment, and the next minute the crowd were joining Cheap Jack in cries of "Put it on, put it on!" To render himself a still greater favourite than he appeared to be already, the young man complied with the request. He stripped off his own coat, and throwing it down on the counter, tried on the red one. And now the public joy seemed to become intense. The crowd cheered, and insisted on Urban's marching, once at least, round the fair in his new costume.

Before he had been half round, however, he felt something like a great rent under his arm, and, looking down, he perceived that the seams of his new coat were beginning to give way. He now hastened back to Cheap Jack

for his own garment. But it was nowhere to be seen. "Nobody had seen it, nobody had taken it; nobody," said Cheap Jack, "knew nothing about it."

"And my money," cried Urban in dismay, "that was in the pocket."

They all apparently knew less even about the money than about the coat, so that all left for poor Urban to do was to fly into a rage, and to declare that he would complain to the authorities of Thriftham.

"The mayor," he cried, "shall know how I have been treated! Fair creature, inform me which is the way to the mayor's residence?"

The old lady thus addressed seemed very much frightened, and in timid accents hastened to describe the direction the young man must follow; and at last, with the help of some other passers-by, he succeeded in finding the house. It was a great stone mansion in the centre of one of the principal squares, and just at the time when Urban arrived, a long row of carriages were drawn up before the door.

"The mayor has a party to-day," said one of the crowd. "Come, let us gape at them going in!"

At the same moment Urban perceived some individuals in coats precisely similar to the one he had purchased, and now wore. "Ah!" he said to himself, "I see the other gentlemen are attired like me. This seems to be the fashionable costume in Thriftham-on-the-Ware." He then stepped quite confidently in, and introduced himself to one of the red-coated, gilt-buttoned individuals as "Urban, the son of Prince Felix of Fairylands, come to pay a visit to the Lord Mayor of Thriftham-on-the-Ware." The person addressed was none other than one of the family lacqueys; what was Urban's surprise then, when the man seized him by the coat-collar, at the same time calling out to one of his companions, "I say, Jeames, here's a go! Caught the fellow that stole the livery. Inquire of his worship what's to be done with him."

This was indeed worse than all that had gone before, for Urban had the mortification to discover, not only that he was figuring in menial's cast-off livery, but that he was actually suspected of having stolen it. He protested energetically that he was entirely

innocent, and complained in loud and bitter terms that he had been duped by the people of Thriftham. When the lord mayor and the lady mayoress arrived on the spot, he repeated his whole story from the moment of his quitting Fairylands, not omitting his intention of procuring the gilt weather-cock from the church-steeple; and wound up by imploring them to obtain him redress from the dealers at the fair. His worship, the lord mayor, seemed doubtful, her ladyship was shocked, while the domestics tittered all round.

“If your story be true, young man,” said the mayor, “find out some acquaintance of your father’s in this town to go surety for you, and we shall see then what is to be done. I shall give you two days for that purpose.”

But the lady mayoress here cried out, “Surely the youth is not going to be set at large! He is stark mad, and will do mischief! Pray have him placed in the great asylum outside Thriftham!”

After this you may be sure Urban lost no time in making his departure. Bowing respectfully to the lord mayor, he hastened

away, and taking all the back lanes and unfrequented alleys, so as to avoid the vicinity of the fair, he finally arrived at his hotel towards evening, where his servant was anxiously waiting for him. Worried and fatigued after the experiences of the day, our young hero bade good-night to his host immediately after supper, and retired to his sleeping apartment.

As he passed through the general-room, Urban had observed the customers grouped comfortably round the fire-place, enjoying their pipes and snuff by the cheerful blaze, and conversing together in confidential undertones.

“I am sure those people below-stairs are speaking about *me*,” he said to himself, as he reached his room, and lighted his candle. “I wonder what they are saying, and whether it is good or evil?”

This idea disturbed him so much that he could not fall asleep at all; and at last his curiosity mounted to such a pitch, that he actually slipped on some of his garments, and making his way on tip-toe downstairs, stood listening breathless at the door. The lights

were now extinguished everywhere but in the general-room, where the landlord and Urban's own servant sat in the midst of the group by the fireside.

Urban listened attentively to catch his own name; but instead of anything relating to himself, what he overheard was a long list of the most wonderful anecdotes, about robbers and murders, and travellers strangled in the dead of the night. A cold shudder crept over him as one horror after another was dealt out in a mysterious hollow whisper by the cronies round the fireside. Yet still he listened, fascinated, until he trembled at the thought of returning to the dark, and his hairs began to bristle up on his head.

At length a general move was made among the group by the fireside, and Urban fled full speed like one haunted to his own room, and buried himself in his bed-clothes. Here a cold perspiration broke out on him, and he trembled till his teeth chattered. It was just the hour of midnight. He heard it strike from the old church-tower beneath the golden weather-cock. Half beside himself, he sprung up on his bed, and, seizing the silver candle-

stick, perceived a figure advancing towards him armed with some shining instrument like a dagger. In his despair he gained a sort of wild courage, and rushed full force at his enemy.

The next moment something fell with a heavy crash, that resounded through the whole house, and brought the landlord and his family to the spot. The servant-men, the chamber-maids, the other guests, and all the cats and dogs assembled in Urban's apartment to see what was the matter. By the light from their numerous lanterns and candles they could discover nothing but the young man, pale and trembling, standing before a large mirror, the glass of which was shattered to a thousand pieces.

The landlord, of course, was extremely angry. He scolded Urban in round terms, and was at first for ordering him then and there to settle his bill and quit his establishment, but afterward was persuaded to let him wait until day-light.

* * * * *

The following morning Urban was rather crest-fallen to find that the innkeeper in-

sisted on retaining his horses against the hotel expenses, which it was impossible for him to pay. There was nothing now left for him to do but to send his attendant home on foot, with the pawnbroker's balls and the barber's gilt basin, to Fairylands, while he himself sallied forth to search for some of the large shops which supplied his mother, the Princess Amanda, with her household wares.

And now, behold! all at once Fortune seemed to smile on our young hero. The very moment he quitted the threshold of the inn, whom should he encounter but his former acquaintance the silk-mercant, who had given him such a glowing account of the city of Thriftham-on-the-Ware.

Now Urban was attired that morning in the same red coat, only this time with the lining turned to the outside, so that it was no wonder the merchant had difficulty first in recognising him, and afterwards in suppressing his amazement at finding him such a guy. He was very friendly, however, and drawing a card from his pocket-book, pencilled a few lines on it, and then handing it to Urban, said :

“Take this to my brother-in-law, the banker, who has his office in the large building at the end of this street ; present it to himself personally, and he will at once furnish you with the sum necessary for a new outfit, as becomes Prince Felix’s son, and what will suffice for your return to Farylands.”

“And what name shall I ask for ?” inquired Urban.

“His name is well-known all through Thriftham. Ask for Banker Greedy.” And so saying, the silk-mercator went his way.

“Greedy, Mr. Greedy,” repeated Urban to himself. “What a ridiculous name !” and he burst into fits of uncontrollable laughter. On reaching the bank, he was obliged to walk to and fro in front of the house several times, trying to regain his composure. At last, by dint of biting his lip and clenching his fists tight, he managed to enter the office with a steady countenance. But now the difficulty began again. He felt sure that the clerks were gazing at him, nay, smiling at his expense—and the dreadful name !—he couldn’t bring himself to pronounce it before them all.

At this moment a great round-faced gentleman with a bald head strutted into the office, with an air of conscious dignity; and his arrival was the signal for all pens to scratch over the paper at a double pace. Urban felt convinced that this was the banker himself; and as the gentleman stared at him in astonishment, he walked up to him, and holding out the card, said, "If you please, sir, are you Mr. Gre . . . ?" but he could get no further, for, covering his mouth with his hands, he exploded again into such a fit of laughter that the whole office rang, and all the clerks began to giggle behind their desks.

"Young man! do you come here to insult me!" cried Banker Greedy in thundering accents. "Out, I say! Out this instant! or I shall call in the police."

On gaining the street, poor Urban burst into a flood of tears.

"There is nothing for me," he sobbed, "nothing, but to make the best of my way on foot back again to Fairylands. Oh dear! oh dear! Thriftham is not a nice place at all! Why did I leave Fairylands, and my dear father and mother, and my little sister Sylvia?"

Poor Sylvia! I have got no gilt cock for her after all! Poor Sylvia!—she was so badly hurt, and now, perhaps, is dead! Oh, I am a wretch, a fool! I never was so miserable in all my life!”

“Hollo there! make way for a nobleman’s chariot to pass!” cried a voice at his elbow, and on wiping his eyes Urban beheld the tinker and donkey he had run over with his glass-coach. “Eh! what’s the matter, young master? methinks you look very sentimental this morning.”

“Alas!” sobbed Urban, “I have lost everything I had; and how am I to get back to Fairylands?”

“Tramp it, like your betters,” returned the tinker, in a consoling tone; “or, if you prefer, help me to mend some old kettles, and in a day or two I shall be going back the same road, and will give you a lift in my cart. More I can’t offer you, my young man.”

But Urban shook his head despondingly.

“Think well of it before you refuse such a good offer,” repeated the tinker, good-naturedly. “You’ll get your pot of ale quite reg’lar, and I want a ’prentice.”

Urban was hungry at that moment, as he had had no breakfast, and he hesitated, thinking he had better join the tinker. But again, he said within himself, "The son of Prince Felix and the Princess Amanda mending old kettles, and driving a tinker's donkey! Oh no! it cannot be! Many thanks, my good man, for your kind proposal, but at present I must set out at once for Fairylands; I know the way, and if my strength suffices, shall arrive there sometime."

After this, poor Urban turned his back on the city of Thriftham, and, crossing the Ware, commenced his trudge along the dusty high-road. He hung his head modestly as he slipped past the turnpike, and, casting a glance through the hedge, saw the broken remains of his father's coach lying in the ditch. A little farther on he stumbled over a single gilt ball all crushed, and by-and-by over two more, which he recognised as his own purchases. "The gilt basin is probably lying somewhere else," he murmured, "and the beautiful golden cock is still on the top of the old church-steeple! Oh dear! how foolish I have been!"

The tears rolled down his cheeks, and he tottered along, weak with hunger and vexation. When night came, he sat down under a tree, and cried himself asleep, and when he awakened the next morning early, he could scarcely move, he felt so stiff, and so famished.

Nevertheless he pushed his way gradually on towards his home.

And now he began to feel dreadfully ashamed of himself, and to dread meeting his father and mother and his little sister Sylvia. "What if they despise me altogether?" he said, weeping; "and what if Sylvia be dead whilst I have been acting so foolishly? Oh dear! I had better lie down and die, when I get within sight of Fairylands. But I must see my home again from afar, the lofty trees of my father's beautiful estate."

Thus he continued till, footsore and weary, he almost fell over something lying on the road, buried in the mud. He was now not far from Fairylands, and when he picked up the object which had tripped him, Urban recognised it as the *brown paper parcel* which the old foster-nurse of Prince Felix

had offered him, and which he had disdainfully thrown away. He now grasped it eagerly, and shaking the dust from it, and unfolding wrapper after wrapper, he came to the last envelope of all, which bore, instead of C. S. merely, the two words, *Common Sense*. "Ah! that is what I have not had for so far," said the young man to himself, as he now proceeded to see what was in the inside of this.

It was a beautiful little prism, cut and polished, clear as crystal. He not only could see very distinctly through it; but he saw himself reflected on one side, and all the country round on the other. He beheld himself as he was, neither so fine as he had imagined when in the great city, nor so wretched as he had pictured himself in his despair. Then on the landscape side, he beheld, to his intense joy, the reflection of his own home, and the figures of three people moving down the stately avenue which conducted to the little gate-keeper's lodge. Here stood the old woman herself, the nurse of Prince Felix, and the last of the fairies left in Fairyland. The other three people Urban

beheld approaching, and he overheard them all inquiring with anxious voices, "Oh, have you seen anything yet of our Urban?"

It was his father and mother, and his little sister Sylvia, and the next moment Urban was locked in their arms. In their joy at finding him again, they made no mention of his silly behaviour at Thriftham; the news of which had reached their ears long ere his arrival.

Only once afterwards the good Prince Felix remarked to his son, that he must take care never again to journey forth from Fairy-lands without being provided with C. S.

THE SILVER VOICE.

ONE time a poor lad known as Florian found himself for the first time alone in the world. His father and mother were dead, and he was sitting on an empty trunk in an empty garret. Suddenly in stepped the landlord, and cried, "Hallo, boy! I want my rent; it's just a week due to-day. What have your parents left you to pay for the use of this garret?"

Whereupon poor Florian exclaimed, "I know not. I once heard my mother declare that a brave heart had my father bequeathed me; and before he died, my father once said, 'You inherit your mother's sweet voice, my son.'"

"But these will not pay me my rent," cried the landlord, highly indignant. And what did he do, moreover, but seize on the

empty trunk, and turn poor Florian out on the street, and fasten the door behind him.

Then the youth wasted no words on the angry landlord, but, lonely and hungry, weary and friendless, pushed his way through the crowded streets, heedless of where he was going. On and on he went past the busy hastening people, speaking to no one, and no one speaking to him.

At length, when it came towards evening, he saw the great cathedral, and heard the vesper music swelling out through the lofty windows. The solemn strains of the organ seemed to speak to his soul, they seemed to invite him in to be comforted.

Soon went Florian to the cathedral, and crept behind a massive column at the end of one of the aisles, and soon forgot his sorrow in listening. He even joined in the singing, and the longer he sang the more his sadness vanished. And by-and-by the singing diminished, as one by one the people left the cathedral. But Florian still sang on. Then, at last, when the organ ceased, he was left singing alone. Then Florian listened, and heard another voice, like a silver bell, swell out

through the arches of the old cathedral, and, listening on, and full of delight, he fell asleep behind the great column, and dreamed of that Silver Voice.

In the early morning poor Florian was roused from his beautiful dreams by a gruff, sour-tempered old beadle shaking him roughly and crying :

“Get out, you young scapegrace! Who allowed you to pass the night here? Go home! Be off in an instant!”

To this the youth replied nothing, but turned again into the streets. And now he bethought himself of the wonderful beautiful Voice, and tried to remember, once more, exactly how it had sounded.

But the rolling and jostling of waggons and carriages over the pavement, and the din of the bustling multitude in the noisy thoroughfares jarred on his ears and confused his memory entirely. So he said to himself,

“I shall leave the city behind, and in some quiet spot I shall think of the beautiful Voice, and perhaps again sometime its silvery note may fall on my ear.”

Soon Florian found himself in the country,

where the larks were singing high over the meadows, where the rail and the cuckoo's notes sounded from a hedge hard-by, and the blackbird and the thrush and the little goldfinch all warbled together from the skirts of a fir-thicket bordering his way.

Under the trees were two tiny children gathering cowslips. They raised their heads when Florian passed, and gazed so steadfastly at him that he stopped and questioned them.

"Did *you* ever hear the Silver Voice?" he said, "out here in the country—a wondrously beautiful voice!"

"What sort of a voice?" the children said; "how did it sound—how was it?"

Then Florian sang to the children—to the boy and the girl; and they listened amazed and delighted, standing stock-still with staring eyes and parted lips.

"It is something like that," said Florian, when he had finished, "only more beautiful; have you never heard it? Do you not know where it is to be found?"

"Come home with us," cried the little girl, "and there we will ask our grandfather; perhaps he can tell you."

“Oh yes!” said the little boy. “Grandfather is so wise; he has travelled far and wide in big ships round the world; he knows everything, *every—thing!*”

So Florian went with the children home to the grandfather's cottage. And as they walked under the fir-trees the children laughed, for a great blackbird hopped along behind them, and a hare darted three times across the path before their very feet; and above their heads a lively little squirrel accompanied the three, springing with his bushy brown tail in the air from one branch to another.

Then they left the trees behind, and all passed down a little lane, which led them towards the sea. And here stood the grandfather's cottage. The old man sat by a blazing fire of turf and whins. A grizzly beard had Grandfather Con, and weather-beaten cheeks, and the palm of his hand, as he greeted Florian, was like a piece of leather. A chain of curious sea-birds' eggs hung on the wall, and pieces of coral and finely-polished shells lay close beside his oil-skin hat and fishing-tackle. These had hung there for many a day, for the old man's sailor-days had

long gone by. Now he was stooped with age, trembling in every limb, and his eyesight almost gone.

Then Florian asked old Grandfather Con—
“Had he ever heard that Silver Voice? did he know where it was to be found?”

“What silver voice?” said the old man.
“How is it—what is it like?”

Then the youth sang; his voice filled the cottage, and the old sailor listened with breathless delight, while the children stood motionless, with beaming eyes, smiling to one another to see the grandfather's pleasure.

When at last Florian suddenly ceased, half-exhausted, all three drew a long, silent breath. And then the old man quickly said :

“See, children, the youth is tired; bring out some food and put it before him, and when he hath eaten and rested, we will hear him singing again.”

Poor Florian gratefully accepted the food, for he had not tasted a bite for many hours. Meanwhile he questioned old Con once more about the Silver Voice.

“Oh yes! oh yes! I know where it is to be found,” said he; “I have heard it my-

self, though not as thou shalt hear it, my son."

Then the youth was all impatience, sprang to his feet, and cried :

" Say! where shall I hear it? Name the spot, and let me go now !"

" Oh, not so rash! young man," said old Con. " First thou wilt let us hear thy singing again, and afterwards I will name the place which contains the magic Voice."

But scarcely did the clear sweet notes of Florian rise aloft, and ring through the smoky rafters of the cottage, when a tap was heard at the door, and a woman entered. She had been crying, for the tears still stained her pallid cheek. She was poorly clad in a thin short dress, and had neither shoes to her feet nor cap on her head.

" Whose voice did we hear?" she cried. " Was it yours?" she said, turning to Florian. " Oh! pray, fair youth, I beseech you, come to my poor hut hard by, and sing a strain to lull my weak, sick babe to sleep. I have rocked it, and nursed it, but all in vain. Oh, come! *do* come!"

" Go with her," said old Con, nodding to

Florian ; " but mind to come back again, and give me the rest of thy strain, if thou wilt know where to find the Silver Voice."

So the poor mother and Florian entered together the little hut. There, on a mattress of straw, lay the sick child, wailing aloud, and tossing from side to side. The woman raised it up in her arms, and, hushing it, pointed at Florian, who began at once to sing the sweetest lullaby he could imagine. At once the baby's moaning ceased, its tiny face began to smile ; it laughed and crowed, and stretched its little fist towards Florian.

And still he sang, until the infant's head sank upon the mother's breast in undisturbed repose. Oh, how gratefully did that weary woman gaze at Florian when the child had fallen into healthy sleep !

Then, with a warning gesture, she raised her hand, as suddenly the door was unbolted, and in stepped a traveller. The man looked from one to the other, and from both to the sleeping babe, in great bewilderment ; then whispered in a lowered breath, " Who sang ?" The woman waved her hand towards Florian.

"Then come with me, young man," said the traveller, hastily.

"No!" cried the youth, when once outside the hut; "I must go back to Sailor Con, who can tell me where to find the Silver Voice;" and then he told the traveller all.

But the other said how that in his master's house there was to be a feast that night, a banquet, and a supper in the servants'-hall; and how that he had ridden all day long, had scoured the country-side for good things to rejoice the guests. "And you will be our minstrel in the servants'-hall," said he to Florian; "your sweet young voice will make us gay. Come, mount behind me, we have little time to lose."

Then the youth mounted beside the traveller, and away they rode o'er hill and dale.

Poor Florian was half asleep when, in the dusk of the evening, the horse, with him and his companion, stepped under a heavy gateway, into a large courtyard surrounded by stables, with a fancy name above the door of every one: "Blue-Beard" and "Pippin," "Lady Jane," "Little John," "Daisy" and

"Dart." At their approach the owners of these names presented their nostrils and forelocks through the open panels in the stable-doors, and one and all raised such a neighing welcome as brought a little crowd upon the scene, ostlers, coachmen, gardeners, valets, lacqueys, grooms and "boots."

Now Florian's companion was none other than Robin, the king's own falconer. But Florian did not know this was the royal castle; he had not seen the turret walls, the terrace slopes, the winding lake with graceful swans, the herd of timid deer dart by them coming through the park, nor the royal arms emblazoned o'er the castle gates. Nor did he know it was the Princess Selma's birthday, and all made merry within the castle walls.

He only heard a mingling of voices cry: "Hey, Robin, nearly come too late! The feast is just begun. Whom have you there? Come both to table."

Soon in the servants'-hall he sat beside his good friend Robin. A plenteous feast was on the table, and all the serving-men were there beside the serving-women, the cooks, the

housemaids, and the lady's-maids, with the housekeeper herself at the head, all in their holiday attire.

In another wing of the royal mansion a more gorgeous banquet still was spread. Noble knights and fair ladies were gathered there. Oh! what a flashing of jewels, what a rustling of silks, what a chinking of swords and spurs! And all in the midst, more brilliant than any, sat the king and the queen, and between them, more lovely than all, their only daughter, the Princess Selma. And this was her birthday night!

How the ladies minced to one another, and simpered, and played with their knives and forks! How the gentlemen twirled their moustachios, and tried to make compliments to the ladies, and pretended to laugh over silly jokes!

Then the sturdy old king grew impatient, and when, in a moment of silence, the distant laughter and glee from the servants'-hall were heard more distinctly, he chafed in his chair, and muttered aloud to the queen:

“*They* are having it merrier than we. Call out the minstrel; let us have music at least!”

Then a little old man with a wizened face, at the other end of the room, began to make curious sounds on his strings, and, by way of apology, said he was tuning his instrument. It was just at this moment then that a strange, melodious strain was heard streaming forth from the servants'-hall.

The king heard it, all heard it, and a moment of silence followed.

"Fetch hither that sweet-voiced stranger!" exclaimed the king.

And soon all eyes were turned on Florian, who, trembling and blushing, now stood before them.

"Sing to us, young man!" said the king.

"Sing," said the queen, in a gracious voice, "as you sang in the servants'-hall!"

Then Florian raised his voice, the rich, clear tones swelled through the spacious room, filled every nook with melody, and thrilled through the soul of each enchanted listener.

The young Princess Selma felt bewildered with wonder and happiness. She seemed in a magical dream, and her eyes were fixed on young Florian.

When at last the youth paused and looked timidly round, a little abashed by the silence, the king cried out :

“ You shall stay here, young man, and be our musician in future. Nor indeed shall you lack for anything.”

But Florian, in sudden terror, exclaimed : “ And the Silver Voice ? ” and, swift as an arrow, he darted out past the servants’-hall, past the paved courtyard, the castle-gate, the lake, the park, and all.

Then the king and the queen looked around in dismay, and the King, standing up, with his hand on his sword, declared that Florian must be found ; and he swore that whoever should find him, be it a knight, he should marry the Princess Selma ; and, be it a lady, she should marry young Florian.

Then all the knights and all the ladies determined to seek him at break of day.

At break of day, ay ! . . .

At break of day strange tidings ran through the castle. The Princess Selma was gone !

She had not waited till break of day to

go out and look for Florian. It was never distinctly found out whether the fairies had guided her, or whether kind Robin had hinted to take the path by the sea.

At any rate thither the fair Princess Selma directed her steps, and hour after hour she went, not meeting a creature, but frequently calling—

“ Florian !”

At last she came to some poor fishermen's cabins, and, gazing all round her, suddenly started, and laid both hands on her heart, it was beating so violently. It was indeed Florian's voice that she heard in the cottage of Grandfather Con.

Then she stepped inside, and joined her entreaties with Florian's.

“ Speak, Sailor Con ! where is the Silver Voice to be heard ?”

The old man said distinctly and slowly :

“ In the *Fairy Grot* by the sea. Take my boat that is moored by the beach to get there ; and my little grandchildren will show you the way. 'Tis not the first time they have been in the Fairy Grot with their grandfather.”

No sooner had Selma and Florian and the children left the old man's hut than the little party came across two dogs, furiously fighting together. How they wrestled and yelped and barked and bit!

Then Selma was terribly frightened, and clung to Florian's arm; and the children, poor things, were scared as well, and hid their little faces in the skirts of Florian's coat. But he was not afraid, he softly hummed a song as he went, and suddenly both the dogs ceased quarrelling, wagged their tails, and came fawning on Florian, and following him.

And thus they all entered the boat. Florian seized the oars, and sang for very joy as he rowed, and his song was borne by the breeze over the rippling tide. And from the little pools on the rocks, and from every crevice and cranny on shore, the little sea-animals raised their heads, the sea-urchins and crabs, the limpets and whelks, the mussels, the shrimps and anemones, and stretched out their feelers towards Florian.

And as the little bark plied on, it left a furrow traced in the glassy sea-surface, where

the fishes made bubbles and rings without number, for they too followed Florian.

And so they steered into a little hollow between two massive rocky pillars. Here the water was clear as crystal below them, and columns of rock met over their heads above.

"We must pass in there," said the children, pointing their little hands to a round hole at the end of the rock.

So they all crept out of the boat, climbed up the ledges of stone, and in through the passage the children had shown.

And what did they find ?

A beautiful cave, with a lofty ceiling all studded with glittering diamonds, and supported by great crystal columns, and a tiny fountain playing gracefully in the midst. This was the Fairy Grot indeed !

Young Florian must sing with delight. Then, as his clear young voice was raised aloft, another voice, as clear, as sweet, in silvery notes responded. As his voice rose, *it* rose ; as his voice fell, *it* fell ; ceased when he ceased, then as his rose again, *it* sounded forth from all sides ; and as he paused be-

wildered, it died away again among the crystal columns and distant unseen nooks and corners of the wondrous cave.

Then Selma and the children clapped their hands and cried :

“ We know the meaning of the Silver Voice. 'Tis but the echo of our Florian's song.”

Then all at once the cave resounded with a different cry :

“ Florian has found the Silver Voice !
The Princess Selma has found Florian !
And we have found the Princess Selma and them all !”

And at once a band of knights and ladies, with lights and torches, and last of all the king and queen, came crushing into the Fairy Grot.

And now it seems as if our story ought to finish here, for did not the king give Selma here to Florian ? and did not the brave old monarch erect a royal castle on the rocks above for himself and the gracious queen, and Florian and Selma, with a certain secret passage down to the Fairy Grot ?

And many a summer evening was the cool,

refreshing grotto illuminated with tapers, which made the crystal columns flash and the little fountain sparkle as the court sat round and listened to the soul-bewitching, magic strains of Florian with the Silvery Echo !

THE LOST PRINCESS.

“ONCE upon a time” there was a king and a queen, who had an only daughter. They lived all together in a large castle at the edge of a deep forest, and the young princess was celebrated far and wide for her extraordinary beauty.

Now the king was called Orlando, the queen was called Theodosia, and their daughter Flora. Princess Flora was good as well as lovely, and was therefore a favourite with all the good fairies; while the wicked disliked her, and were jealous of her being better and more beautiful than themselves.

One day it happened that the Princess Flora was out alone walking in the forest near the castle, when a sad accident befell her. It was a lovely day, and yet so delightfully cool under the thick foliage of the

beeches and spreading oaks, and there were so many sweet-smelling blossoms peeping out of the moss on every side, violets, wood-anemones, and lilies of the valley, that the young lady quite forgot herself, and wandered on from flower to flower, heedless of her way.

At last she became tired, and wanted to return home. But she had lost her way, and, to make matters worse, whom should she meet but a wicked fairy, who offered to guide her, and then directed her by a false path, so that in a short time the poor young Princess Flora was completely astray in the dark forest.

Now a long way off from King Orlando's castle—in fact, quite at the other extremity of the forest—there lived at this time two young cousins of the same age, with their uncle, King Ulric. They were brought up as his sons, and the one was named Otto, and the other Rupert. Their aunt, Queen Hulda, lived also with them, and she and their uncle were so kind to them that they were both very happy.

One desire, however, they both had unsatisfied. When quite little boys, their old

nurse often described to them how beautiful King Orlando's little daughter Flora was, for nurse had a sister at the castle as house-keeper, and when she went once a year to visit her, she was always taken to the nursery to see the little favourite of the household. Every year she came back then to the palace of King Ulric full of the praises of the Princess Flora. So no wonder indeed that the two boys' heads became turned with curiosity to see the little lady.

At the same time nurse always noticed how Rupert wanted to hear again the illustrations of Flora's kindness, obedience, and sweetness of temper; while Otto, on the contrary, dismissed all that with a wave of the hand, and would have more details about the beauty of her hair, the fine dresses she had, and the brilliant jewels she sometimes wore. We may imagine then the sensation there was in King Ulric's court one fine morning, when a messenger arrived from the castle of King Orlando and Queen Theodosia with the tidings that the Princess Flora was lost in the forest. It appeared, moreover, that the royal parents had consulted the good

fairies as to the best method of finding her again. And now, in accordance with that advice, they sent inviting the two young princes to aid in the search, offering at the same time their daughter in marriage to whichever of the two should find her first.

Now this proposal pleased King Ulric and Queen Hulda very much, for they too had formed a good opinion of the Princess Flora, from all they had heard about her from time to time.

Without further delay, therefore, Otto and Rupert started forth, each being equipped with a bottle of water, a wallet of bread, and a staff in his hand for the journey, in accordance with the advice of the good fairies.

They looked hopeful and brave, these two young princes, setting out together, both the same age and the same height, each with the glow of health in his cheek, and the restlessness of youth in his eye. Yet Otto was the handsomer of the two.

The king and the queen stood on the stone staircase in front of the palace to gaze after them.

“Dear me!” said Queen Hulda; “I wonder which shall gain the Princess Flora?”

“Let that not trouble my royal lady,” said the old nurse from behind. “The good fairies will bestow the Princess Flora on him who deserveth her best.”

Meanwhile the two youths had entered the forest. Neither spoke a word, until Otto said to Rupert that he thought there was no occasion for them to go separate ways in searching for the lost princess. “Much better for us both to find her together,” said he, “and then allow the young lady to choose which of us she will have.”

All the while, in his own mind, he thought to himself, “I am a much finer fellow than Rupert, and of course she will choose me.”

As for Prince Rupert, he was not quite satisfied with this arrangement, remarking that it would not hasten the recovery of the poor lost princess; but he thought it better to let his cousin have his way than to waste precious time arguing.

So on they went through one leafy avenue after another, heedless of the waving ferns, the strawberry blossom, and the trailing ivy

at their feet. They sometimes stopped by a running stream to refill their water-bottles, and, kneeling down, Otto would pause to gaze at the image of his own handsome face in the water, and would repeat to himself, "If Princess Flora has eyes at all, she surely will have me."

For so far the two princes had met no human being in the wood, the only living creatures they encountered being a jumping squirrel, a startled hare, and a herd of antlered deer. But now a very different object met their view. Coming towards them was a ragged, wretched, dirty-looking old man. His hat was miserably battered and torn; his flesh shone through the loop-holes of his tattered garments; and by the haggard look of his face, he seemed as if he had not tasted food for a fortnight.

"Ah! what a pitiful sight!" exclaimed Rupert.

"Ugh! how disgusting!" cried Otto, turning his head the other way. But the old man, accosting them, begged for a mouthful of bread, for he was very hungry, and poor, and unhappy.

“And do you think we have time to stand talking to every old ragamuffin we meet?” cried Otto; “you don’t know whom you are speaking to, I guess! We are the Princes Otto and Rupert, come out to find the Princess Flora; and as for bread, we have barely what will do ourselves by the way. So get out of our sunshine, you old bundle of tatters!”

At this cruel speech the wretched old man cast an appealing look at Rupert, who was already engaged in opening his wallet of bread. “I may spare you some, my poor old man; but if you are very hungry I am afraid it will hardly suffice,” he said, handing out more than half of his cake of bread.

“Oh! come along, Rupert, and don’t be foolish!” cried Otto, seizing him by the arm. “If we tarry to parley with every tramp by the way, we shall never discover fair Flora. And besides, it’s beneath us, *as princes.*”

But Rupert’s heart was melted with pity for the wandering beggar. “Alas!” he said, “I see you *are* hungry. Come, eat all my bread, and be welcome. And partake of a draught of the water!” Then the two youths saw that the old man had a ring on his finger,

the shape of a golden star, with a hole in the centre.

“ Ay, ay !” said the old man, “ that is the place where the pearl was ; and before I lost it, I was not so ragged and mean and hungry as now. And with that he devoured every crumb out of Rupert's wallet, and drank every drop of the water.

After that, the two young princes journeyed on alone. The day was hot and the way was long, and still no sign of the lost princess. And poor Rupert became both hungry and thirsty. But Otto did not share with him ; he merely said, “ You see now, my cousin, which of us was the wiser.”

And so it grew dark as the night set in. Then through the trees the youths perceived glimmering lights. Now these shone from the window of Fairy Midsummer's Mansion. A good fairy was Fairy Midsummer, for she kept open house in the forest for hungry and weary wanderers of every honest description.

Here then the young princes rested and slept after their day's adventures.

The first rays of the sun on the following morning slanting down through the leafy

boughs of the Elm Forest lighted on Otto and Rupert starting afresh to seek for the Princess Flora. They hunted the narrow winding paths, they peeped down the shady alleys, and scanned the thicket branches. They kicked aside the withered leaves, but they found no trace of the princess.

Meanwhile Otto complained of the trouble, and could only beguile the way by chasing after the butterflies, and throwing fir-cones at the squirrels. Still on they went, and by mid-day they had left many a rood behind.

Now this part of the forest was very silent and lonely, and for so far the two young princes had been accosted by no one. 'Twas no wonder, then, that they started on suddenly hearing beside them a stifled moan in the forest.

They turned to the right and the left; they looked before and behind, and at length perceived a little old woman, all stooped with age, coming towards them. She appeared to be almost blind, for she groped her way with a great deal of trouble.

“Oh, good young masters,” said she, “whoever you be, take pity upon an old woman who is

in the deepest distress ! You see, I am nearly blind ; and all last night I have wandered about, trying to find my way in the dark. For only think, at midnight hour a sudden breeze in the forest blew out my light." And with that she held up an empty lantern—a lantern the shape of a star. "And, O young sirs !" she continued, "perhaps you would have the kindness to guide me in the way ?"

"Poor creature !" said Rupert ; "but where do you wish us to guide you ?"

"Well, maybe, young gentlemen, maybe you have heard of Fairy Midsummer's Mansion ?"

"Fairy Midsummer's Mansion !" cried Otto, in a voice full of scorn and contempt ; "if you think we are going to lose a day trailing back to Midsummer Mansion, you are, indeed, much mistaken ! Do you know who it is you have got the impertinence to speak to ? I am Prince Otto, and this is my cousin Rupert, and I have come to find the Princess Flora ; certainly *not* to bother my head with old ugly hags like you !"

Then the poor old woman, trembling with age and fatigue, addressed herself to Rupert, and said :

“ Oh ! pray, young master, I am weak and tired, and very blind, and shall never find my way to the Fairy Midsummer’s Mansion, unless you consent to assist me.”

Then the young Prince Rupert could not refuse, for it went to his heart to see old age in such a sorry condition. So he offered his arm to the blind old woman, and carried her lantern for her, and declared he would go the whole way with her back to the Fairy Midsummer’s Mansion.

And Otto ? He dragged sulkily after, complaining and growling about the loss of time and the folly of Rupert, and making rude jokes from time to time about the figure they cut together—the old blind woman and Rupert.

And to say the truth, it was late at night before the three entered the halls of the Fairy Midsummer’s Mansion.

And now arrived the third day of the search for the poor little lost Princess Flora. Otto and Rupert were just starting out again,

when the Midsummer Fairy herself came to them.

“I wish you two young knights-errant,” she said, “to carry a burden for me. You are both young and strong, and may very well bear this on your shoulders, time about, to a certain woodman’s house, which I will describe to you presently. The house is a long way off, and to find it you must follow the path bordered by the young elders. Now, what I send must be carried with care, for it contains nothing else than a gift from me to the man and his wife, who live in the house at the end of the path bordered by the young elders.”

With that she brought out a hamper, all covered over with moss, and corded and tied with rushes, and placed it on Otto’s shoulder.

No sooner, however, were the two youths out of the fairy’s presence, than Otto flung the hamper down on the grass, and cried out :

“I am no labouring hind ; I am no beast of burden. Prince Otto does not come out to find his lady, packed like a mule for the

market! We have lost enough time already, all through this Midsummer witch! Let the old dame convey her own presents home to their owners!"

But Rupert said:

"Oh, Otto, she has dealt with us kindly in giving us two nights' rest and refreshment, and therefore let *us* from gratitude do *her* this favour. That done, we will search again for the princess."

And with that Rupert lifted the hamper, and proceeded along by the path bordered by the young elders. And Otto came after, mocking and jeering at Rupert, and repeating that he would never touch the burden with one of his fingers.

Indeed, when the heat of the day came on, the great hot drops of moisture fell from poor Rupert's brow, and his fingers grew sore with holding, and his back grew stiff, and his feet became swollen and blistered.

But Otto, who lightly tripped along on the sward beside him, beneath the cool shade of the elders, lamented far more than he did, and abused the good Fairy Midsummer, and Rupert, and everybody.

Then, towards the afternoon, they met a grandly-dressed lady, just going the same way as they went. She seemed to please Otto immensely, for she glittered with jewels and feathers.

“Poor fellow!” she cried to Rupert, “you really ought not to carry a burden so heavy! Pray leave it down on the ground till somebody comes to assist you, or your health will surely be injured.”

But Rupert only shook his head; he was too much exhausted to answer, and so never heeded her further, but trudged on before with the hamper.

Then Otto walked with the lady, and talked to her.

“I am the rich Prince Otto,” he said, “and that is my servant walking before me. Those are my presents he carries there for the Princess Flora, whom I am going to marry.”

Then nothing would please the lady but she must see the presents, and she asked Otto to open the hamper for her. And Otto, he called to Rupert in a most commanding voice to lay down the hamper, and show what was

in it directly. For, to say the truth, he himself was just as curious as she was.

But Rupert went on, and took no heed to either the one or the other, for the weight of his burden left him no strength to waste on words or discussions. Then Otto, assuming the master, cried out :

“ Were it not for the lady’s presence, I would punish you well for your insolence !”

And the lady, laughing, replied :

“ I think he is not worth our notice.”

And then she offered honey to Otto, and unripe raspberries and strawberries, which he took for excellent eating.

And so, as the day closed in, came the end of the shady alley bordered by the young elders. And there, to Rupert’s and Otto’s surprise, stood a beautiful castle, with an arched entrance, and lights shining forth from every window. A sentry stood under the archway, who called to Rupert :

“ Whence come you ?”

Said Rupert :

“ I come from the Midsummer Fairy, and this was her message exactly, ‘ That this hamper, a present from her, was to be placed

in the hands of the man and his wife who live in this house.' ”

“The man and his wife,” said the sentry, “that is the KING ORLANDO, and the gracious QUEEN THEODOSIA! But fear not, young man; enter in, and deliver the present in person!”

“And I am his cousin,” cried Otto; “I am Prince Otto. Allow me to enter in; and this lady, a friend of mine.”

“You may go in if you will,” said the sentry, “but your gay companion is none but the wicked fairy who beguiled the lost Princess Flora! She knows better than enter here.”

And Otto, in fact, perceived she had vanished, all stricken with terror.

And now Prince Rupert entered a brilliant apartment, where sat the king and the queen; and not only they, but his own uncle and aunt, King Ulric and fair Queen Hulda. Then Otto and Rupert came forward to King Orlando and Queen Theodosia; and suddenly both the youths noticed that the king wore a ring, the shape of a *star*, with a pearl in the centre, and that on a

table beside her the Queen had a lighted lantern also the form of a star.

Then the royal pair told Rupert himself to open the hamper. And all the courtiers gathered round to see Fairy Midsummer's present. Then the rush-cords were untied, and the dried moss was lifted away, and then . . . oh! who can guess what was found in the hamper?—*The lost Princess Flora* herself, as large as life, and lovelier than ever!

How lovely she looked when she smiled on Rupert, and thanked him for bringing her safely!

And then all the courtiers rejoiced because Rupert found her first; for the king and the queen had been telling how kind he had been in the forest to the hungry old man and the blind old woman, who were only themselves in disguise.

At this part, Otto took sick with chagrin and with the honey and unripe fruit he had eaten, and had to be slipped off to bed.

After all that came the wedding of Prince Rupert and Princess Flora, and then a great banquet, and then great rejoicings all over the kingdoms, and shaking of hands among

the kings, and kissings among the queens. And, as people say in the country, "the married couple lived happily all the days of their life!"

THE END.

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